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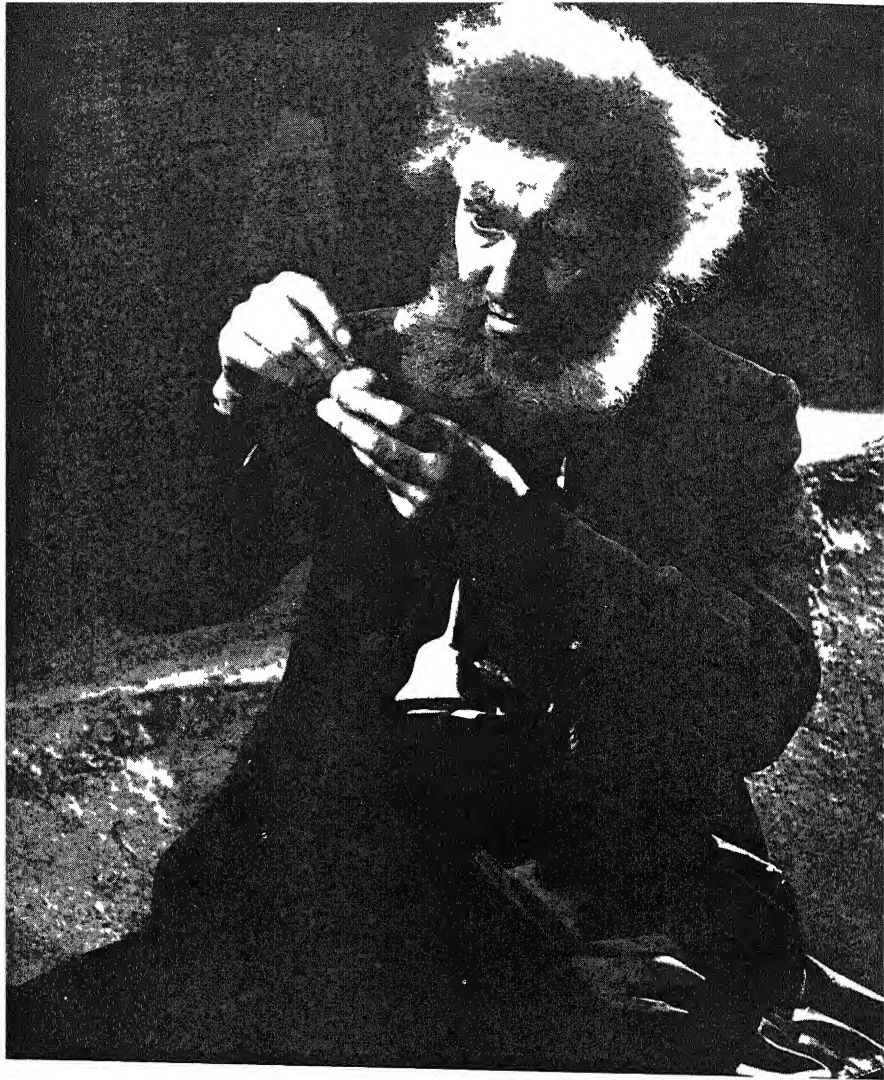
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PEER GYNT



When am I going to get to the heart? (Page 145)

Frontispiece

PEER GYNT

BY
HENRIK IBSEN

English Version by
NORMAN GINSBURY

Foreword by
TYRONE GUTHRIE

LONDON
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Applications for performance of this play by amateurs and professionals should be addressed to Norman Ginsbury, c/o Messrs. Hammond, Hammond & Co., Ltd., 87 Gower Street, London, W.C. 1

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FOREWORD

PEER GYNT is Everyman. He is you and I and the man across the street. As in *Hamlet*, the play's greatness derives from the universality of its central figure. Not all of us have Hamlet's nobility, inclination to melancholy and metaphysical speculation, nor Peer's robust thirst for experience, power and applause. Yet on each of these great creations so much humanity has been lavished that almost every civilized person can identify himself with either and with both.

All of us share in some degree that quality that is the essence of Peer, the desire to be Oneself, to express fully one's egotism; and when we find ourselves baffled in this desire by the conflicting desires of other people, and by the very nature of the universe, like Peer we fall back upon fantasy and create an imaginary world, where the creature one imagines to be Oneself can reign supreme.

Ibsen pursues this theme of the illusion of self to an end where the identity of Peer Gynt is "merged again into the mass." All that is left is the constant image of an ideal Peer in the consciousness of Solveig; perhaps not even that, for Solveig at the end of the play is no more than one more fantasy in the consciousness of Gynt.

The adventures of Peer are partly real and partly symbolic. In the first part of the play, that is the first three acts, it is pretty clearly indicated that some of the episodes are to be accepted as actual happenings, while others—the meeting with the Green Woman, the scene in the Troll Kingdom and the fight with the Boyg—are to be supposed dreams, hallucinations, the products of delirium induced by the agitating experiences with Ingrid, with the cowherd-girls, by drinking and, finally, by concussion when he bashes head-first into a rock.

The second part—act four—the Oriental sequence—is

more concerned with factual experience, treated in a more impressionistic and more satirical manner than the first part. The other characters whom Peer meets are not so much symbols as caricatures; and the shape of the act is a steady crescendo of unkind farce from the rather obvious, but theatrically effective opening at the millionaires' picnic, working up and up to the violent horror of the madhouse; interrupted at exactly the right moment by what must be one of the earliest and most brilliantly effective uses of a device now made familiar by the films, the flash-back, the reminder to the audience—but not, I think to Peer—of Norway and of Solveig.

The third part is set in Norway again. But this time not a Norway of summer sunsets, of homely junketings and peasant interiors, but of storms at sea, of screaming winds, of ice and mists, winter and death. This act is almost entirely allegorical; fact is subordinate to symbolism.

By the end one should seem to have gone with Peer—almost *as* Peer—on a pilgrimage from youth to old age; from Norway round the world and back again to Norway; back to the home that is home no longer but a heap of ruins and rubbish; back to the scenes of youth and springtime seen through the mists of winter, the dim eyes of a bitter, hard old man.

At the very end the mists clear for a moment. There, where it has always been, though he could not see it, is the hut that he built for Solveig. Home. It is crowned with the reindeer antlers, symbol of power, of masculinity, of sportsmanship, of the success Peer grasped only to plunge fathoms deep into the tarn of disillusion, despair, annihilation. There in the hut is Solveig—now raised to the symbolic status of Everywoman, his wife and his mother. He falls at her feet and asks

“Where was I?

My real self, my whole self, my true self?

Where was I, with God's seal upon my brow?”

“Your riddle is easy,” she answers. “In my faith, in my hope, and in my love.”

The Sphinx/Boyg within him is answered and she rocks him to sleep on her breast.

But it is not the conventional, cosy Happy Ending. The Button-Moulder waits at the next cross-roads.

What do the various symbols of the play really mean?

About this it would be unwise to be dogmatic, or even to attempt accurate definitions. Poetic symbolism is designed to inflame the imagination and must not be asphyxiated in a specimen-bottle, transfixed with a pin and exhibited under glass. It must be interpreted subjectively, and one interpretation may differ from another yet both be right. To me, for instance, the Boyg represents a state of mind—indecision, miserable doubt, the sort of weakness that is a common after-effect of influenza. This interpretation seems easy to link up with the Sphinx, identified with the Boyg by Peer himself, and its traditional attributes of inscrutability, riddling, cruelty and so on. But I would never claim that this interpretation was the only possible one, or that half a dozen others could not be equally significant.

The Trolls are a familiar feature of Norwegian folk-lore and are difficult to remove from their own environment. Their existence is essentially part of a wild and savage landscape, where nights are long and human habitations few. One cannot readily imagine the Troll Kingdom in the Thames Valley. The very word has a harshness for which all equivalents in English seem prettified—fairy, elf, gnome, goblin, imp, pixie, kelpie, little people, leprechaun, and so on, all smack a bit of the dancing-class and Ye Art Shoppe.

Ibsen never intended *Peer Gynt* for the theatre. Like Hardy's *Dynasts* it is meant to appeal to the eye and ear of imagination. The only excuse for attempting to put it on the stage is that, despite difficulties that make adequate representation impossible, it none the less makes a thumpingly good entertainment.

Part of the box-office "draw" of any production in this country hitherto has undoubtedly been Grieg's music. *Peer Gynt* to most people has not meant Ibsen's play but

Grieg's suite of incidental music for a production of the play in Germany.

Good as the music is, it has dated in a way that the play has not. The play remains modern, the music is inescapably of the mid-nineteenth century, of the period known in England as Victorian. It is Victorian in its musical idiom; Victorian in its interpretation of the text; it is adapted to a Victorian technique of stage presentation. If this music is used one is committed to a certain style of production. It demands a pictorial convention that accords with the score; something pretty, something compatible with nineteenth-century ideas of propriety and good taste. Certain scenes are given undue weight and importance by the music. The Troll King's scene for instance, for which Grieg has written a prelude of considerable length. This gives time for the stage staff to prepare an elaborate spectacular scene and the curtain rises as the prelude works to a grand finale with full chorus, which forces the scene into an operatic style that is, in my opinion, at variance with the text.

The same sort of criticism applies to almost all Grieg's interventions. It is very good music but very confusing to the play. Anitra's Dance, for instance, which Grieg has made lyrically erotic—a respectable predecessor to Scheherazade, whereas Ibsen's Anitra is obviously a squalid fat ninny; or the celebrated "Morning" prelude, which is romantic and Wordsworthian in feeling, while the soliloquy it is designed to interpret presents a Go-getter incongruously stranded in the Sahara. The three Cowherd-Girls appear as three sort of Wagnerian Norns, three Valkyries without their helmets. While for Solveig he has written two most beautiful arias which are rightly renowned the world over. But if Grieg's intention is to succeed Ibsen's must fail. For the part of Solveig must, to serve Grieg, be played by a majestic Diva who can run off a deceptively simple operaticized folk-song that ends with an octave jump to high A *pianissimo*; and who can bring the final curtain down with the famous Wiegenslied, sung *nobilmente*, with a heavily scored accompaniment for full orchestra. By this means immense applause

can be guaranteed for the curtain-calls, but the intention of the author is not realized, since, if the Diva knows her business, she will make sure that the end is an apotheosis of Radiant Womanhood and that the Button-Moulder's last speech has either been cut, or drowned in warm treacle from the band-pit.

If I ever have the opportunity of staging *Peer Gynt* again I shall hope to feel free to jettison Grieg, to jettison any "realistic" scenery; and to spend the time thus saved on playing more of the text than is otherwise possible. For *Peer Gynt* is not a naturalistic any more than it is an operatic piece. If it is to be presented at all, it must be with great simplicity, even austerity.

It is for this reason that I commend this English translation. Archer's was more literal, and to William Archer's versions of Ibsen the English-speaking theatre must be eternally indebted. They have the great virtue of supreme respect for their original. But it is, I fear, largely due to Archer that, for English people, the world of Ibsen appears so dowdy, so humdrum. It is still not realized what a humorous writer Ibsen is; still believed that his plays are exclusively concerned with footling old photographers handicapped by repellent whiskers and Nonconformist consciences, with huge serious women in mackintoshes, with the disposal of sewage from the Reformatory.

Norman Ginsbury has, I think, shown in his translations of some of the prose plays—*Ghosts* and *The Enemy of the People*—a witty man's perception of their humour, and a graceful tact in the relation of Norwegian social and theatrical conventions of the mid-nineteenth century to those of England to-day.

This version of *Peer Gynt* has no great poetic afflatus of its own. It does not claim to have. It would be highly unsuitable if it did. There would be Grieg trouble all over again.

Translation must not be positive in style. Its only positive virtues can be clarity, accuracy, sympathy with the spirit as well as the literal sense of the original, and the good manners to realize that a good translator's work is unobtrusive.

May 1946.

TYRONE GUTHRIE.

NOTES ON TRANSLATION OF "PEER GYNT"

A GERMAN impresario once assured me that Shakespeare in the German tongue is far superior to Shakespeare in English. When I had cooled down I pointed out, with fair logic, that Shakespeare in English is as superior to Shakespeare in German as Ibsen in Norwegian is superior to Ibsen in English—or German. At that time I had not prepared this version of *Peer Gynt*. It has not made me change my mind. I am humbly aware of the fact that the greatest works lose most in translation.

Mr. Tyrone Guthrie, for whom this translation was made, asked for a version that was alive, and I have tried to bring out the "aliveness" of the complete poem rather than give an absolute interpretation of this or that word. Throughout I have worked on the basis of rhythm without rhyme. The rhythm of each scene is that in the original play. Rhyming, except in occasional instances, was dispensed with because it soon became apparent that the rhymes of the Norwegian poem could only be recreated in English at the expense of meaning. Rhymes which "came" have been retained, but they are very few and have not been forced into the text.

Professor A. H. Winsnes and the authorities of the Royal Norwegian Government have given me valuable assistance and encouragement. To them and to Miss Evelyn Ramsden, whose interest and help have made this version possible, I offer my sincere gratitude and thanks.

N. G.

This version of *Peer Gynt*, in a shortened form, was first produced at the New Theatre, London, on 31st August 1944, with the following cast:

Aase, a peasant's widow	SYBIL THORNDIKE
Peer Gynt, her son	RALPH RICHARDSON
Two Old Women with corn-sacks	NANCY NEVINSON, VIDA HOPE
Aslak, a blacksmith	HUMPHREY HEATHCOTE
Wedding Guests, a Steward, a Fiddler, etc.	—
A Man	GEORGE RELPH
His Wife	—
Solveig } their daughters	JOYCE REDMAN
Helga }	
The Farmer at Heggstad	CHARLES LENO
Ingrid, his daughter	NICOLETTE BERNARD
The Bridegroom and his Parents	MICHAEL WARRE, MICHAEL RAGHAN, VIDA HOPE
Three Cowherd-Girls	—
A Woman in Green	MARGARET LEIGHTON
The King of the Dovre	NICHOLAS HANNEN
Troll Courtiers, Troll Youths and Maidens; Two Witches, Gnomes, Hobgoblins, Nixies, etc.	—
An Ugly Boy	MAURICE NICHOLAS
Voice in the Dark; Birds' Cries	—
Kari, a cottar's wife	NANCY NEVINSON
Mr. Cotton, M. Ballon, Herr von Eber- kopf and Herr Trumpeterstraale, Tourists.	SYDNEY TAPLER, MORRIS SWEDEN, NICHOLAS HANNEN
A Thief; a Receiver	
Anitra, daughter of an Arab chief	VIDA HOPE
Arabs, Female Slaves, Dancing Girls, etc.	—
The Statue of Memnon (and song); The Sphinx at Gizeh (mute)	—
Professor Begriffenfeldt, Ph.D., Director of the lunatic asylum in Cairo	HARCOURT WILLIAMS
Huhu, a language-reformer from Malabar	—
Hussein, an Eastern Vizier	NICHOLAS HANNEN
A Fellah with a Royal Mummy	WEYMAN MACKAY
Some Lunatics and their Keepers	—
A Norwegian Skipper	CHARLES LENO
His Crew	—
A Strange Passenger	GEORGE RELPH
A Parson; a Funeral Party; a Representative of the Law	—
A Button Moulder	LAURENCE OLIVIER
A Thin Man	—

The action begins in the early part of the nineteenth century and ends about 1867. It takes place partly in Gudbrandsdale and the surrounding mountains, partly on the Moroccan coast, in the Sahara Desert, in the Lunatic Asylum in Cairo, at sea, etc.

Play Produced by TYRONE GUTHRIE
Settings and Costumes by REECE PEMBERTON

ACT I.—SCENE I

SCENE: *Near AASE's farm. A wooded hillside down which rushes a mountain stream. On the farther bank is an old mill. A hot summer's day. PEER GYNT, a well-built young man about twenty years old, is coming down the path. He is followed by a slight, frail, very angry woman. She is AASE, Peer's mother.*

AASE. Peer, you're lying.

PEER. (*without stopping*). What? Me? Lying?

AASE. Well then, swear that it's the truth.

PEER. Swear? Why should I?

AASE. Pshaw, you're frightened!

Lies, lies, lies! That's all it is.

PEER. Everything I've said is Gospel.

AASE (*confronting him*).

Can you face me without blushing?

First, just when the busy season's

Starting, you go off for weeks,

Cutting capers in the mountains,

Stalking reindeer in the snow!

Back you come all torn and tattered—

Where's your game? And where's your gun?—

Thinking you can take me in

With idiotic hunting stories!

Tell me where you saw this buck?

PEER. Just near Gendin.

AASE (*with a mocking laugh*). That sounds likely!

PEER. I was hidden in a thicket,

Sheltering from the icy blast.

He was pawing in the snow,

Foraging for lichen.

AASE (*as before*). No!

PEER. I held my breath, I stood and listened,

Heard the crunching of his hoofs.

Then I saw his mighty antlers,

So I slowly slithered forward

On my belly. I was covered
 By the boulders. I peeped out.
 What a buck! So sleek, so fat!
 I could scarcely believe my eyes.

AASE. Scarcely!

PEER. Bang! I took a shot.
 The buck fell bump among the boulders.
 In the twinkling of an eye
 I was straddled on his shoulders,
 Holding on to his left ear.
 Just as I was going to plunge
 My knife into his gullet—Hi!
 The ugly brute reared up and screamed,
 Tossed his head and knocked my knife
 Clean from my hand, then braced his horns,
 Pinned me to the loins and held me
 By the legs in a steel vice.
 Then he bounded off like lightning
 Right along the Gendin Ridge.

AASE (*involuntarily*).

Christ above!

PEER. You know the ridge?
 Half-a-mile from end to end
 It stretches, sharp as any scythe.
 Down beyond the glaciers,
 Beyond the slopes and grey ravines,
 You can see on either side,
 Two thousand feet and more below,
 The brooding waters of the lakes.
 Along that edge, the buck and I
 Clove a pathway through the sky.
 What a ride and what a steed!
 Far ahead of us, the sun
 Was shining on the glaciers.
 And in the terrifying void
 That stretched from us to those dark lakes,
 Golden eagles seemed to float
 And fall away like motes in sunlight.

Avalanches hurtled down,
 Yet no sound reached me; but all round,
 Dancing, singing, circling, swinging,
 Went the dizzy mountain sprites,
 Blurring sight, confusing hearing.

AASE (*faintly*).

Oh, God help me!

PEER.

Suddenly,

From his perilous retreat,
 On the edge of the great chasm,
 Right underneath the reindeer's hoof,
 A ptarmigan rose in the air,
 Cackling, flapping his great wings,
 Terrified. The buck swung round,
 Reared on his hind legs, made one bound
 And out into sheer space we plunged.

(AASE totters and holds on to a tree-trunk.)

Behind, the giant mountain wall!
 Below, a bottomless abyss!
 First, we tore through banks of cloud,
 Then dispersed a flock of seagulls;
 Screaming, circling all around us,
 They scattered where the four winds bore them.
 Down we went with gathering speed;
 Far beneath us something gleamed
 Whitish, like a reindeer's belly.
 Mother, it was our reflection
 Mirrored in the mountain lake.
 Up, up, up it came to meet us
 At the same mad pace as we
 Hurtled downwards to the waters.

AASE (*gasping for breath*).

Peer! God help me! Tell me quickly!

PEER.

Buck from air, buck from the depths
 Clashed together violently,
 Spraying foam for miles around.
 There we were, half drowned. At last,

We scrambled to the northern shore.
The reindeer swam and I held tight
Till—here I am!

AASE. But where's the buck?

PEER. The buck? He's probably still there.

(Snapping his fingers and turning on his heel.)

Findings keepings! Go and look!

AASE. How is it that your neck's not broken?

Both your legs are right as rain.

You haven't even cracked your spine.

The Lord be praised! Cry out with joy

To God who shielded my dear boy!

Your breeches! They're not even torn! . . .

But that is quite a minor point

When you think what might have happened

From a fearful fall like that!

*(She stops suddenly, stares at him wide-eyed, open-mouthed
and speechless, then suddenly breaks out:)*

Oh, you liar! Oh, you devil!

Oh, my God! What lies, what lies!

It's all come back to me! I heard it

First when I was still a girl.

This fairy-tale you've just been telling,

It happened to that Gudbrand Glesne,

Not to you—

PEER. To me as well.

If he could do it so can I.

AASE *(angrily)*.

Yes, you can polish up your lies,

Adorn them and embellish them,

Dress them up in their Sunday-best

And hide the dried-up skin and ribs.

That's the way you spend your time,

Building castles in the air,

Inventing and imagining,

Riding on an eagle's wing,

Lying right and lying left,

Talking so much tommy-rot
That listeners are left bereft
And never know what's what—or not!

PEER. If anybody else said that,
I'd waste no time; I'd knock him flat.

AASE (*weeping*).

Oh, God, I wish that I were dead
And buried deep down in the earth!
Not even tears and prayers affect him.
You're damned—that's all there is to it!

PEER. Dearest, pretty little mother,
Everything you say is true.
But why worry? Cheer up!

AASE. Quiet!

Cheer up? How can I be happy?
I've reared a pig and not a son.
It's a lasting, crying scandal
That a poor defenceless widow
Should have to hang her head in shame.

(*She begins to cry again.*)

What is left of all the wealth
Your rich grandfather used to own?
Where is all the solid cash
That Rasmus Gynt left? Flown, gone crash,
Squandered, dissolved! It ran like sand
Straight through your father's open hand.
He bought land here, there, everywhere,
Sported a gilded coach and pair.
And now where's all the cash he wasted
At that famous winter feast
When every guest there flung his glass
Crash against the wall behind?

PEER. Where are the snows of yesteryear?

AASE. Hold your tongue when mother's talking.
Take a look at our fine house.
Half the windows stopped with rags;
Fences, palings, hedges down;

The cattle out come wind come rain,
Fields and meadows never touched
And every month a new restraint.

PEER. Stop your moaning and your groaning.
You know it never rains but pours.
Our luck is out—well, it will turn.

AASE. The earth that used to be so rich
Is sour; but you—you walk around
As spry and smug and self-assured
And just as perky as that day
The parson came from Copenhagen
And asked you your baptismal name;
Then swore the town's most learned men
Would envy such a brilliant boy.
And so your father, pleased as Punch,
Gave him a horse and then a sledge,
All for his kindly condescension.
In those days nothing went amiss.
The Church, the Army, everyone
Who mattered hung around and ate
And drank until they nearly burst.
Adversity shows us our friends.
The very day John Money-bags
Set off with his pedlar's pack,
This house became a silent tomb.

(Drying her eyes with her apron.)

And you, you great big healthy lout,
You ought to be a rod and staff
To comfort me in my old age.
You should be wrapped up in the farm
And seeing to your heritage.

(Beginning to cry again.)

God knows how much help I've had
From you, you scamp! When you're at home
You poke the fire—that's all you do.
You frighten all the girls you see
At dances in the neighbourhood,



The ugly brute
reared up and
screamed (Page 10)



I'll put you up
here on the roof
(Page 19)



He's clamberng up! My God, like a goat! (Page 34)

Evil seems good and black becomes white (Page 45)



You make a laughing-stock of me,
You brawl and fight with everyone.

PEER (*moving away from her*).

Shut up, mother.

AASE (*following him*). Is it true

That in that recent drinking bout
At Lunde, where you scrapped like dogs,
You were the leader of the fight?

Can you deny that it was you
Who broke the blacksmith Aslak's arm?
Or, if that isn't quite the case,
You put his finger out of place.

PEER. Who's been running to you with tales?

AASE (*hotly*).

The cottar's wife. She heard the yells.

PEER (*rubbing his elbow*).

Yes, but it was I who yelled.

AASE. You?

PEER. Yes, I. I got the licking.

AASE. What's that?

PEER. Have you felt his muscles?

AASE. Whose?

PEER. His, Aslak's. Well, I have!

AASE. Good God! You make me want to spew.

An idle, tippling, leering sot,
A loafing, drunken idiot,
A silly lump like that has thrashed you.

(*Beginning to cry again.*)

I've put up with shame and scorn
Because of you, but this, this is
The biggest blow of all to stomach.
Even if he has big muscles
Must you be a stupid weakling?

PEER. It's of no account at all

If I thrash or if I'm thrashed,
As long as you can have your cry. (*Laughing.*)
Cheer up, mother!

- AASE. You've been lying!
 Have you?
- PEER. Yes, this time I have.
 Dry your eyes and stop your crying.
(Clenches his left hand.)
 Look! With this pair of pincers here
 I held the smith and bent him double.
 My sledge-hammer was my right hand.
- AASE. Ruffian! You'll bring me to the grave
 With your madcap goings-on.
- PEER. Come, come! You're worth a better fate,
 Better twenty thousand times!
 Darling, simple little mother,
 Surely you can trust in me.
 The countryside for miles around
 Will bow and scrape to you. Just wait
 Till I do something really great!
- AASE *(contemptuously)*.
 You?
- PEER. Who knows what the future holds?
- AASE. If you only had the sense
 To darn your breeches I'd be thankful.
- PEER *(hotly)*.
 I'll be a King, an Emperor.
- AASE. God in Heaven, the poor boy's losing
 The little bit of brain he's got!
- PEER. Give me time, that's all I ask.
- AASE. "Give me time, I'll reach the skies,"
 That is how the saying goes.
- PEER. Mother, wait——
- AASE. Be quiet! you're mad!
 Yet you might have got somewhere
 If you had not spent your time
 Building castles in the air.
 The girl at Heggstad wanted you
 And you could have won her, too,
 If you'd gone about it properly.
- PEER. Do you think so?

AASE. The old man
 Can't resist his daughter's whims.
 He's firm enough up to a point,
 But in the end she gets her way.
 Wherever Ingrid goes her father
 Stamps behind and minds his step.

(*Begins to cry again.*)

Ah, my Peer! She oozes gold!
 An heiress! Think of it, if you
 Had set your mind on it you could
 Have been a handsome bridegroom now,
 And not a filthy, smelly tramp.

PEER (*briskly*).

Come with me, I'll start my courting.

AASE. Where?

PEER. At Heggstad.

AASE. My poor boy,
 That road is closed to lovers.

PEER. Why?

AASE. Oh, dear God, I'd like to cry!
 You've lost your opportunity!

PEER. Why?

AASE. While you scoured the mountain tracks
 And rode your reindeer through the sky,
 Mads Moen went and got the girl!

PEER. What? Him? That fool! That laughing-stock!

AASE. Yes, that's the man she's marrying.

PEER. Wait for me, I'll go and get
 The mare and cart——

(*Begins to move-off.*)

AASE. You needn't bother,
 The wedding is to-morrow.

PEER. Bah!

I can get there by to-night.

AASE. You'll go and make things ten times worse.
 They'll add insult to injury.

PEER. Don't worry! It will be all right.
It takes too long to get the mare.
(*He shouts and laughs at the same time.*)
Ready, Mother? We'll leave the cart.

(*He picks her up.*)

AASE. Let me go!

PEER. No! I will carry
My mother to the wedding-feast.

(*Wades out into the stream.*)

AASE. Help! Oh, Lord, have mercy! Peer!
We're drowning!

PEER. Not me! I was born
To die a glorious death.

AASE. You will!
You'll swing for this in God's good time.

(*She pulls his hair.*)

Oh, you beast, you!

PEER. Stop your struggling.
The bottom's very slippery here!

AASE. You donkey!

PEER. Talk on! Words aren't dear.
Your sticks and stones will break no bones.
There now! It's getting shallower!

AASE. Don't let me go!

PEER. Gee-up, gee-up!
Shall we play at Peer and reindeer? (*Galloping.*)
I'll be the reindeer, you be Peer.

AASE. I'm fainting! Where am I? Oh dear!

PEER. There now! We've reached the other side.
(*Climbing the bank.*)

Now give the deer a nice big kiss
And thank him for the lovely ride.

AASE (*boxing his ears*).

That's the thanks you'll get from me!

PEER. Ow!

That's a handsome tip, I must say.

AASE. Let me go!

- PEER. To the wedding first!
You are such a clever talker,
Reason with the silly fool,
Say Mads Moen is always drunk.
- AASE. Put me down!
- PEER. Let your smooth tongue run.
Tell him the virtues of your son.
- AASE. You can set your mind at rest,
You'll get a character—the best.
I'll tell him everything I can
About my good-for-nothing son.
Believe me, I won't be too brief.
- PEER. Indeed? Well, well!
- AASE. And I won't stop
Until the old man sets his dog
On you as though you were a thief.
- PEER. In that case I must go alone.
- AASE. In that case I will follow on.
- PEER. Mother dear, you haven't strength to——
- AASE. You shall see! I'm in the mood
When I could grind the rocks to flour!
Ha! I could make a meal of flints!
Let me down!
- PEER. Well, will you promise——
- AASE. No, I'm going there with you.
I'll tell them all just what you are!
- PEER. Then you shall stay just where I choose.
- AASE. Never! I'll follow on behind.
- PEER. Oh no, you won't!
- AASE. What will you do?
- PEER. I'll put you up here on the roof.
(He puts her on the roof of the mill. AASE screams.)
- AASE. Lift me down!
- PEER. Will you listen then?
- AASE. No!
- PEER. Mother dear, take my advice.
- AASE *(throwing a lump of grass at him)*.
Lift me down this instant, Peer.

PEER. I can't, I dare not, else I would.

(Goes nearer.)

Now remember, please, sit tight.
Don't move your legs, don't shift an inch,
Don't tear the thatch because you might
Fall off and then——

AASE. You horrid beast!

PEER. No kicking!

AASE. I wish you'd been whisked,
Like a changeling, off the earth.

PEER. Shame!

AASE. Bah!

PEER. You should give your blessing
On a trying trip like this.
Will you?

AASE. I will wallop you,
Big and burly as you are.

PEER. Well, good-bye then, dearest mother.
Be patient! I won't be too long!

(Goes off, but turns and shakes his finger at her.)

Remember now! Quiet as a mouse!

AASE. Peer! God help me, he has gone!

Reindeer-rider! Liar! Hi!

Will you listen? No, he's off

Across the fields——

(Shouting.) I'm fainting! Help!

(Two OLD WOMEN with sacks on their backs are approaching the mill.)

1ST OLD WOMAN. Who can that be cackling?

AASE. Me!

2ND OLD WOMAN. Aase! You've gone up in the world!

AASE. The world? I'll rise to Heaven soon.

1ST O.W. A pleasant trip!

AASE. Fetch me a ladder!

Get me down! That King of Knaves——

2ND O.W. That son of yours?

- AASE. Now you have seen
With your own eyes how he behaves.
- 1ST O.W. We'll bear witness.
- AASE. Help me down!
I'm off to Heggstad instantly.
- 2ND O.W. Has he gone there?
- 1ST O.W. Then you're avenged.
The blacksmith's going to the feast.
- AASE (*wringing her hands*).
Oh, God help me! My poor boy!
They'll finish up by killing him.
- 1ST O.W. I've often heard them give a hint.
Don't worry, you'll soon get the proof.
- 2ND O.W. The old girl's dotty, that's quite clear.
(*Shouting up the hill.*)
Eyvind, Anders! Hi, come here!
- A MAN'S VOICE. Whatever's happened?
- 2ND O.W. Look, Peer Gynt
Has stuck his mother on the roof.

ACT I.—SCENE 2

SCENE: *A slope covered with bushes and heather. Behind it, and divided from it by a fence, runs the high road. PEER GYNT comes along the path, goes quickly to the fence and gazes out over the landscape.*

- PEER. Heggstad at last! I'll be there pretty soon.
(*Swings a leg over the fence, then hesitates.*)
I wonder if Ingrid's alone in her room.
(*Shades his eyes and looks out into the distance.*)
No! They'll be swarming around her like flies
With their gifts. I'm beginning to think I'll go home.
(*Withdraws his leg.*)
They'll only start laughing behind my back,
And their whispers brand like a red-hot iron.
(*Moves a few steps from the fence and scratches his head thoughtfully.*)

What I really need is a good stiff drink.
 Perhaps I could slip in without being seen!
 It's a pity they know me! Something damned strong
 Would be best, then their sneers would pass over my
 head.

*(He looks round, startled, then hides in some bushes.
 People carrying wedding presents pass him on their way
 to the farm.)*

A MAN *(in conversation with others)*.

Drink finished his father, his mother's a slut——

A WOMAN. Then it's not so surprising the son's what he is.

*(They pass on; a little later PEER GYNT emerges from
 his hiding-place. He is blushing with shame. He stares
 after them.)*

PEER. That was me they were praising!

(Shrugs his shoulders.)

Oh, well! I won't fret!

I've never known gossip kill anyone yet.

*(Throws himself down on the heather and lies for some
 time on his back with his hands clasped behind his head,
 staring up into the sky.)*

What a curious cloud! It looks like a charger.
 There's a man on his back with bridle and saddle.
 An old hag is following riding a broomstick.

(Smiling to himself.)

It's mother! She's scolding and screaming, "You
 beast!

Hi there, Peer!"

(His eyes are closing gradually.)

Now she's shrinking. I think she's afraid.
 At the head rides Peer Gynt; his vast host is behind
 him.

His harness is silver, his steed shod with gold.
 He wears gauntlets and carries a sabre and scabbard.
 His long flowing cloak is adorned with rich silk.

They are princely, the legion who ride in his train!
 But not one sits his steed so nobly as Peer—
 There's not one so resplendent as he in the sunlight.
 In swarms by the sides of the streets are the people,
 Flinging their hats in the air in their glee.
 The women are curtsying; who does not know
 The Emperor Peer Gynt and his myriad of men?
 He scatters the roadway with pieces of silver;
 Glistening shillings are spread there like pebbles.
 In a trice, every man is as rich as a lord.
 Then, over the seas, through the skies rides Peer Gynt,
 And on the seashore awaits England's ¹ own Prince.
 The loveliest maidens in England are there.
 The great men of England and England's great king
 All rise from their seats as Peer Gynt comes in view,
 And the king doffs his crown and respectfully speaks:

(*ASLAK, the smith, and some others pass on the other side
 of the fence.*)

THE SMITH. Look at that! It's Peer Gynt! The swine's
 dead drunk again!

PEER (*starting violently*).
 Your Majesty—

THE SMITH (*leaning on the fence and grinning*).
 Can't you stand up, my boy?

PEER. What the devil! It's Aslak! And what do you want?

THE SMITH (*to the others*).
 It's the after-effects of the Lunde affair.

PEER (*jumping up*).
 Clear off!

THE SMITH. Don't you worry, we're not staying here.
 But where have you been, man, where have you been
 hiding?
 You've been gone six weeks! Were you caught by the
 trolls?

PEER. I'm astounded myself at the things I've been doing.

¹ Spelt "Engelland" in the original, either for metrical purposes or to indicate an imaginary country in Peer's mind.

THE SMITH (*winking to the others*).

Then tell us!

PEER. No point! It would never sink in.

THE SMITH (*after a pause*).

Are you coming to Heggstad?

PEER. No.

THE SMITH. They used to say
That Ingrid had more than a passion for you.

PEER. You grubby old crow——

THE SMITH (*half turning away*). Now don't lose your temper.

If Ingrid has given you up there are others.

Don't forget you're the son of John Money-bags.

Come with us to the farm! You'll find girls there as
playful

As lambs, and ripe widows ready to fall.

PEER. Go to Hell!

THE SMITH. You'll find someone or other who'll have you.
Good evening, I'll pay your respects to the bride.

(*They go off laughing and whispering. PEER GYNT
stares after them for a moment, then tosses his head and turns
half round.*)

PEER. As far as I'm concerned, Ingrid can marry
Whoever she pleases. I don't care a damn!

(*Takes stock of his clothes.*)

My breeches in tatters, my clothes torn to shreds!

If only I sported a decent new suit!

(*Stamping.*)

How I'd like to sharpen a butcher's knife

And carve the mockery out of their hearts!

(*Looks round suddenly.*)

What's that? Who's that there? I heard somebody
tittering!

I could swear I heard something! I must have been
wrong!

I must get home to mother.

(*Begins to go up the hill, stops again and listens, his
ear cocked in the direction of the farm.*)

The dancing is starting.

(He strains his eyes and ears, then goes slowly down the road. His eyes are gleaming. He rubs his hands over his legs.)

Such girls, such girls! Seven or eight to each man!

Oh, Hell! I must join in, I can't miss a party!

But mother will still be up there on the roof.

(His eyes stray towards the farm again. He skips and laughs.)

Listen! The Halling! They're putting some life in it!

And Guttorm's in form with that fiddle of his!

His notes flash and boom like a waterfall.

And then those girls, all these wonderful girls!

Oh, Hell! I must join in, I can't miss a party!

ACT I.—SCENE 3

SCENE: *The courtyard at Heggstad. The farmhouse is at the back. It is full of guests and there is dancing on the grass. The fiddler is sitting on a table; the STEWARD is standing in the doorway. Maids are going backwards and forwards between the buildings. The older people are sitting around in groups having a good gossip. One of the women joins a group sitting on a pile of logs.*

WOMAN. The bride? Well, of course, she's crying a bit.
But who ever took any notice of that?

STEWARD *(to another group)*.

Come along, gents, drink up, there's lots more in the vat.

A MAN. Thank you! I'm finding it hard to keep pace!

A YOUTH *(flying past the fiddler and holding a girl by the hand)*.

Keep at it, Guttorm, scrape away till you bust!

THE GIRL. Scrape away! Let it echo over the hills.

GIRLS *(in a ring round a youth who is dancing)*.

He can dance, can't he?

A GIRL. He's got such long legs!

THE YOUTH *(dancing)*.

Well, the ceiling's quite high and the room's pretty big.

(*The BRIDEGROOM, half-crying, approaches his father who is talking to a couple of guests. He pulls at his father's sleeve.*)

BRIDEGROOM. Father, I've tried but she won't! She's stand-offish.

FATHER. What won't she?

BRIDEGROOM. She's gone and locked herself in——

FATHER. Well, what about going and finding the key?

BRIDEGROOM. I don't know where to look.

FATHER. You're a blasted young fool.

(*He turns to the others. The BRIDEGROOM drifts away.*)

A YOUTH (*coming from behind the house*).

Peer Gynt's just arrived. Things are going to get lively.

THE SMITH (*who has just arrived*).

Who asked him, anyway?

STEWARD. That's what I'd like to know!

(*Goes to the house.*)

THE SMITH (*to the GIRLS*).

Ignore the chap, girls, if he tries to get friendly.

A GIRL (*to the others*).

As far as we go, he doesn't exist!

(*PEER GYNT enters, brimming over with life. He stops in front of the group and rubs his hands together.*)

PEER. Who's the best dancer here? Which one is Twinkle-toes?

A GIRL (*whom he approaches*).

Not I.

ANOTHER GIRL. Not I.

THIRD GIRL. I'm certain I'm not.

PEER (*to a fourth*).

Well, then, you, before somebody better turns up!

GIRL (*turning away*).

No time.

PEER (*to a fifth*). Well, then, you!

GIRL (*walking off*).

I'm afraid I'm just going.

PEER. Going? So early! You can't be all there!

THE SMITH (*a moment later, in a low voice*).

Look, Peer! She's gone off with that scabby old ram!

PEER (*turning quickly to an elderly man*).

Where are the girls sitting out?

THE MAN.

Go and look.

(*He walks away. PEER GYNT has suddenly lost his vitality. He glances shyly and furtively towards the group. They are all looking at him but not one of them speaks. He approaches other groups. He is met everywhere by stony silence. As he moves away, people smile and follow him with their eyes.*)

PEER (*low voice*).

Black looks, sharp answers, superior smiles!

Sneers! They grate like a file on the blade of a saw.

(*He shrinks away along the fence. SOLVEIG, leading little HELGA, comes into the courtyard with her parents.*)

A MAN (*to another quite near PEER GYNT*).

Here are our new neighbours.

2ND MAN.

The ones from the west?

1ST MAN. From Hedalen.

2ND MAN.

Oh, yes. I think you are right.

(*PEER GYNT approaches the newcomers, and, pointing to SOLVEIG, asks her father:*)

PEER. May I dance with your daughter?

THE MAN (*quietly*).

Yes, certainly, but first

We must go in and pay our respects to the host.

(*They go.*)

STEWARD (*offering PEER GYNT a drink*).

Since you're here you might as well try some of this.

PEER (*staring fixedly after the newcomers*).

No, thanks, I'm not thirsty. I'm here for the dance.

(*The STEWARD walks away. PEER looks across to the house and smiles.*)

How lovely she is! I know no one as lovely!

Her eyes cast down and her apron so white!

And the way she held on to her mother's dress!

And carried her prayer-book wrapped in a kerchief!
I must see her again.

(*Turns to go into the house. Several youths come from the house.*)

A YOUTH. What, leaving so early?

PEER. No.

YOUTH. Then your sense of direction's gone wrong.

(*Grasps him by the shoulders and turns him round.*)

PEER. Let me pass.

YOUTH. Ah, I see! You're afraid of the smith!

PEER. Me? Afraid?

YOUTH. Yes, the Lunde affair's not blown over.

(*The group laugh and go towards the dancing-green.*)

SOLVEIG (*in the doorway*).

I think it was you who asked me to dance.

PEER. Of course! You can't have forgotten me, surely!
Come on!

SOLVEIG. Mother says don't go too far away.

PEER. Mother says, mother says! Were you born yesterday?

SOLVEIG. You're laughing at me!

PEER. Why, you're still quite a baby!
You haven't grown up.

SOLVEIG. I was confirmed last spring.

PEER. Tell me your name, then we'll feel more at ease.

SOLVEIG. My name is Solveig. And what is yours, please?

PEER. I'm Peer Gynt.

SOLVEIG (*pulling her hand away*).

Oh, my God!

PEER. Well, what's wrong with that?

SOLVEIG. My garter's worked loose. I must tie it up tighter.

(*She moves away from him.*)

BRIDEGROOM (*pulling at his mother*).

Mother, I've tried but she won't—

MOTHER.

She won't what?

BRIDEGROOM. She won't, mother!

- MOTHER. What?
- BRIDEGROOM. She won't unlock the door.
- FATHER (*in a low angry voice*).
The boy's only fit to be fed with a spoon!
- MOTHER. Don't scold the poor boy, he'll soon find his way.
(*They walk away. A YOUTH, surrounded by a crowd of people from the dance, approaches PEER.*)
- YOUTH. Brandy, Peer?
- PEER. No, thanks!
- YOUTH. Come, come, just a tot!
- PEER (*looking darkly at him*).
Have you got any?
- YOUTH. Well, perhaps—and perhaps not!
(*Pulls a flask from his pocket and drinks.*)
What a kick it's got! Well?
- PEER. Has it? Let's have a nip! (*Drinks.*)
- 2ND YOUTH. Try some of this! Have a damned good swig!
- PEER. No!
- 2ND YOUTH. Oh, nonsense! What's wrong? You were
never so slow
About having a drink.
- PEER. Well, a tot then, no more. (*Drinks again.*)
- A GIRL (*with lowered voice*).
We ought to be going.
- PEER. You're frightened of me.
- 3RD YOUTH. Who isn't?
- 4TH YOUTH. You showed us a few things at Lunde.
You gave us a bit of an eye-opener then.
- PEER. Oh, I can do more than that once I start.
- 1ST YOUTH (*whispering*).
And he's starting, believe me!
- SEVERAL (*crowding round him*). Come on, let it rip!
Tell us what you can do.
- PEER. To-morrow.
- SEVERAL. No, now.
- A GIRL. Are you good at black magic?
- PEER. I've conjured Old Nick!

A MAN. My grandmother did that before I was born.

PEER. Liar! Nobody else can manage that trick.

I've conjured the Devil inside a nut!

The thing was worm-eaten.

SEVERAL (*laughing*). Well, that's obvious!

PEER. He swore and he cried and he tried hard to bribe me
With this and with that——

ONE OF THE CROWD. Was he forced to get in?

PEER. He was. Then I plugged up the hole with a pin.

Christ! You should have heard the buzz and the
rumble!

A GIRL. Should we?

PEER. Oh, yes. It was like a great bee!

THE GIRL. But where is he now? Is he still in the nut?

PEER. Oh, no. He managed to get right away.

That's why the blacksmith hates me to this day.

A YOUTH. Really?

PEER. I went to the blacksmith and asked him

To hammer that nut for me. He said "Of course!"

He took hold of the nut to hammer it flat.

But being as clumsy as he always is

And swinging his hammer as he always does——

VOICE FROM CROWD. Did he kill the Devil?

PEER. He hit like a madman,

But the Devil went up in a fury of flame——

Hey presto! Straight through the roof and the walls.

SEVERAL. And the smith?

PEER. Just gaped, his hands roasted like beef!

And since that day we have never been friends.

(*Everybody laughs.*)

SEVERAL. That's a good story!

OTHERS. Quite one of his best!

PEER. Are you hinting that I made it up?

A MAN. Not at all!

You couldn't have. It was one of my
Grandfather's stock stories.

PEER. You liar! It happened

To me.

THE MAN. We won't argue.

PEER (*tossing his head*). Why, I can ride
Through the air on a horse. There are dozens of things
Beyond your comprehension that I can do.

(*More roars of laughter.*)

ONE OF CROWD. Come on, ride through the air!

CHORUS OF VOICES. Get going, old chap!

PEER. In my own good time, so stop begging and praying.
The day will come when I'll ride like a whirlwind
Over you all and you'll fall at my feet.

AN OLDER MAN. Stark staring mad!

ANOTHER. He's gone off his head!

A THIRD. The boaster!

A FOURTH. The liar!

PEER (*threatening*). You wait! Mark my words!

A MAN (*half drunk*).

You mark mine! We'll warm your breeches for you.

SEVERAL. A bloody good hiding! A juicy black eye!

(*The crowd disperses, the older ones angrily, the younger ones laughing or mocking.*)

BRIDEGROOM (*near PEER*).

Listen, Peer! Is it true you can ride through the air?

PEER. Of course it is, Mads. There's not much I can't do.

BRIDEGROOM. I suppose you've got the invisible coat?

PEER. The invisible hat, you mean. Oh, I've got that!

(*He turns away from the groom. SOLVEIG crosses the courtyard leading HELGA by the hand. PEER GYNT goes towards them. Life seems brighter.*)

Solveig, you're back! I'm glad! Let's have a dance.

(*Grasps her wrists.*)

I'll show you how light I can be on my feet.

SOLVEIG. Please let me go.

PEER. Let you go?

SOLVEIG. You're so wild!

PEER. Like the reindeer, when the summer comes on?
Come along, girl, don't be so obstinate.

SOLVEIG (*dragging her arm away*).
I can't! No, I dare not!

PEER. Why?

SOLVEIG. You've been drinking.

(*Goes with HELGA.*)

PEER. Why didn't I get my knife and stick it
Right through the lot of them—yes, everyone?

BRIDEGROOM (*nudging PEER with his elbow*).

I wish you'd help me get into her room.

PEER (*absently*).

The bride's? Where is she?

BRIDEGROOM. The loft.

PEER. Ah, I see!

BRIDEGROOM. It's the least you can do, Peer. You might
have a try.

PEER. To get at your bride? You must do that yourself.
(*Suddenly, a thought strikes him. He speaks softly but significantly* :)

Ingrid in the loft!

(*Goes up to SOLVEIG.*)

Have you changed your mind?

(*SOLVEIG tries to go. He bars her path.*)

You're ashamed of me! I look like a tramp!

SOLVEIG. But you don't! It's not true! I don't think it
at all.

PEER. Yes, I do, and what's more, I'm a little bit drunk.
I was piqued. You'd annoyed me. That's why I
did it.

Now will you—?

SOLVEIG. I'm frightened. Even if—

PEER. Frightened? Of whom?

SOLVEIG. Mostly of father.

PEER. Father! I see! He's so very correct!

Does he rule with an iron rod? Well, answer me.

SOLVEIG. What can I say?

PEER. Does he sing in the choir?
And you and your mother? Are you just the same?
Why don't you answer me?

SOLVEIG. Please, let me go!

PEER (*in a low threatening voice*).

I won't! I can turn myself into a troll!
At the stroke of twelve I'll be in your room,
And you'll hear a strange noise—a hissing and spitting,
Next to your bed, and it won't be your cat
But me! I'll drain your blood into a cup,
And I'll grab your sister and eat her up,
For every night I turn myself into a werewolf!
I'll bite your loins and I'll bite your back—

(*Suddenly turns round and entreats her:*)

Dance with me, Solveig!

SOLVEIG (*looking at him darkly*).

No, you've been horrible!

(*She returns to the house. The BRIDEGROOM comes drifting back to PEER.*)

BRIDEGROOM. I'll give you an ox if you'll help me.

PEER. Come on!

(*They go behind the house. At the same time a crowd comes from the green where the dancing has been taking place. Most of them are drunk. There is noise and confusion. SOLVEIG and HELGA come out of the house with their parents and other people.*)

STEWARD (*to the SMITH who is in front*).

Shut up!

SMITH (*taking his coat off*).

No, we'll have this out once and for all.

It's Peer Gynt or I and it's now or never.

SOME OF CROWD. Let them fight it out.

OTHERS. No, let them fight with words.

SMITH. Words! Words be damned! It's fists or it's nothing.

SOLVEIG'S FATHER. Control yourself, man!

HELGA. Are they going to hit him?

A YOUTH. Why not pull his leg with his silly old lies?

2ND YOUTH. Kick him out of the place!

3RD YOUTH. I'll spit in his eye.

4TH YOUTH (to SMITH).

Are you backing out, you?

SMITH (*throwing coat away*). No, I'll murder him.

SOLVEIG'S MOTHER (to SOLVEIG).

Now you can see what they think of the fellow!

(AASE comes in with a stick in her hand.)

AASE. Is he here? Where's my son? I'll give him what for!

My God! What a walloping he's going to get!

SMITH (*rolling up his shirt-sleeves*).

For a scoundrel like him that cudgel's too soft.

VOICES. The blacksmith will bash him!

OTHERS. Will thrash him!

SMITH. I'll smash him!

(*Spits on his hands and nods to AASE.*)

AASE. What? You smash my Peer? Just try if you dare!

His old mother Aase's got sharp teeth and claws!

Where is he? (*She calls:*) Peer!

(BRIDEGROOM comes running in.)

BRIDEGROOM. Father! Mother!

FATHER. What's happened?

BRIDEGROOM. What do you think? Peer Gynt——

AASE (*shrieking*). Have you killed him?

BRIDEGROOM. No, Peer Gynt has—— Look! Up there! On the hills!

CROWD. With the bride!

AASE (*letting her stick fall*).

Oh, the beast!

SMITH (*thunderstruck*). It's a sheer precipice!

He's clambering up! My God, like a goat!

BRIDEGROOM (*crying*).

Look how he's carrying her! She might be a pig!

(AASE *shakes her fists threateningly* 'at PEER.)

AASE. I hope he falls! (*Shrieks in terror.*)

Oh, take care! It's not safe!

(INGRID's father comes out bareheaded and white with anger.)

INGRID'S FATHER. He's raped my daughter! I'll strike him dead.

AASE. God punish me if you touch a hair of his head!

ACT II.—SCENE I

SCENE: *A narrow path high up in the mountains. Early morning.*

PEER GYNT *is walking along, very sullen.* INGRID, *still in the remnants of her bridal dress, is trying to hold him back.*

PEER. Clear off!

INGRID (*weeping*). But where can I go
After this?

PEER. Go where you like.

INGRID (*wringing her hands*).

You villain you!

PEER. Oh, hold your tongue!

This is where we part for good.

INGRID. Memories bind us for ever.

PEER. The devil take all memories!

The devil take all women too,

Excepting one——!

INGRID. Who *is* the one?

PEER. Not you!

INGRID. Well then, who is she?

PEER. Go away! Go home, go back
To your father.

INGRID. Dearest sweetheart——!

PEER. Oh, for God's sake——!

INGRID. You can't mean
What you're saying.

PEER. Every word!

INGRID. You get your way, then pack me off.

PEER. Tell me what you have to offer.

INGRID. Heggstad farm and more besides.

PEER. Is your prayer-book in your kerchief?
Where's your plait of golden hair?
Do you gaze down at your apron?
Do you cling to your mother's dress?
Answer!

INGRID. No——

PEER. Were you confirmed
Last spring?

INGRID. No, but listen, Peer——

PEER. Have your eyes that dear, shy look?
Can you refuse me when I beg?

INGRID. Christ! The man's gone raving mad!

PEER. Does the grace of God descend
On those who see you? Answer me!

INGRID. No, but——

PEER. That is all that matters.

(*Turns to go.*)

INGRID (*stopping him*).

They'll hang you if you fail me now.

PEER. It's a risk worth hanging for.

INGRID. You'll be wealthy, you'll be honoured
If you take me——

PEER. Impossible.

INGRID (*bursting into tears*).

Oh, you swindler!

PEER. You were willing!

INGRID. I was desperate——

PEER. I was daft.

INGRID (*threatening*).

You'll pay heavily for this!

PEER. The heaviest price will be dirt-cheap.

INGRID. You stand by that?

PEER. Firm as a rock.

INGRID. All right then! We'll see who'll win!

(*INGRID goes down the slope.*)

PEER (*after a pause*).

The devil take all memories!

The devil take all women too!

INGRID (*turning her head and calling back mockingly*).

Excepting one!

PEER. Excepting one.

(*They go their different ways.*)

ACT II.—SCENE 2

SCENE: *A mountain lake surrounded by moorland. A storm is brewing. AASE is shouting and peering all round her. She is in despair. SOLVEIG can barely keep up with her. SOLVEIG's parents and HELGA are a little way behind. AASE clenches her fists and tears her hair.*

AASE. Everything's against me with the powers of evil,
The mists, the waters and the cursed mountains!
Mists are rolling down to blind and confuse him.
Traucherous waters are waiting to drown him.
Mountains will open up chasms or crush him.
And the people! All of them out for his life!
Please, God, protect him! I can't live without him.
The rascal! To think that the Devil should tempt him!

(*Turns to SOLVEIG.*)

I can't believe this has really happened.
He, who did nothing but lie and romance,
He, whose strength lay in his powers of boasting,

He, who has done not one stroke of real work,
 He—! I could laugh and cry at the same time!
 We were as one in our sorrow and need.
 You are sure to have heard of my husband's bad name—
 How he roamed round the district throwing away
 His money like dirt, how he drank and he swore,
 While I and my Peer sat alone at home.
 What could we do but try to forget?
 I hadn't the strength to take matters in hand.
 It's ghastly to see Fate staring at you.
 You are desperate to shake off your cares,
 But thought brings nothing but grief and tears,
 So you take to drink or you sham romance.
 Well, we—we resorted to fairy-tales
 About princes and trolls and strange animals too,
 And also of brides who are stolen. But who
 Could know that these tales would stick in his head?

(Getting frightened again.)

Ugh, what a yell! It's a troll or a demon!
 Peer, are you there? Up there on the hill—?
(Runs to the top of the rise and gazes out over the lake.
SOLVEIG's parents join her.)

Not a thing in sight!

THE HUSBAND *(quietly)*. It is worse for him!

AASE *(crying)*.

Oh, my Peer! My poor lost lamb!

HUSBAND *(nodding gently)*. You are right,
 He is lost.

AASE. No, no! You mustn't say that!

He is so clever. There's no one like him!

HUSBAND. You speak like a fool!

AASE. Yes, yes, I know!

I may be foolish, but my boy's all right!

HUSBAND *(still quietly and gently)*.

He's hardened his heart, his soul is lost!

AASE *(fearfully)*.

No, no! Our Lord will have pity on him.

HUSBAND. He's weighed down by his sins. Do you think he'll repent?

AASE. No, but he'll ride through the air on a buck!

THE WIFE. Great God! Are you mad?

HUSBAND. What's that you're saying?

AASE. Nothing's beyond him, I tell you! You wait!
If he lives long enough, he'll do something great.

HUSBAND. It would be better to see him hang.

AASE (*screaming*).

In Christ's name——!

HUSBAND. With a rope round his neck,
His eyes might open; he might repent.

AASE (*bewildered*).

You're driving me crazy with all your talk!
We must find him!

HUSBAND. To save his soul!

AASE. And body!

If he's in the marsh we must drag him out.
We must ring the bells if the trolls have caught him.

HUSBAND. Look, here's a track!

AASE. God will reward you
For aiding me.

HUSBAND. It's my Christian duty.

AASE. The rest of them are nothing but heathens.
Not one would lift a finger to help me!

HUSBAND. They knew him too well.

AASE. He was too good for them.
(*Wringing her hands.*)

And to think—to think that his life's at stake!

HUSBAND. There's a footprint! Look!

AASE. Then we're on the right road.

HUSBAND. We'll scatter and try the moors down there.

(*He and his wife go on ahead.*)

SOLVEIG (*to AASE*).

Please tell me some more.

AASE (*drying her eyes*). About my son?

SOLVEIG. Yes, everything!

AASE (*smiling and holding her head high*).

Tell you everything?

I'd tire you out!

SOLVEIG. You'd tire of talking

Long before I'd tire of listening.

ACT II.—SCENE 3

SCENE: *Low bare hills below the mountain plateaux. Snowclad peaks in the distance. It is early evening and the shadows are lengthening. PEER GYNT comes running in and stops on the slope.*

PEER. The whole of the parish is on my track.
They've armed themselves with guns and clubs.
The old man from Heggstad is at the head.
I can hear him howling! The news has spread
That Peer Gynt's on the run. Not quite the same thing
As a scrap with the smith! This is life! I'm as strong
As a bear!

(He flings his arms about and leaps in the air.)

I'll swim rapids, pull fir-trees up
By the roots! Smash! I'll overturn the whole world!
This is life! It makes your spirits rise,
Steels and toughens! To hell with paltry lies!

(Three COWHERD-GIRLS from the mountains run across the hillside, singing wildly.)

COWHERD-GIRLS. Trond of Valfjeld! Baard and Kaare!
Sleep with us, trolls, and hear our story!

PEER. Who are you screeching for?

COWHERD-GIRLS. Trolls, the whole crew!

1ST C.-G. Trond, be strong!

2ND C.-G. Baard, be gentle and true!

3RD C.-G. There's lots of room in our hut on the hay.

1ST C.-G. Strength is gentle!

2ND C.-G. And gentleness strong!

3RD C.-G. We sleep with trolls the whole night long!

PEER. Where are your men then?

THE THREE (*laughing coarsely*). They've gone away!

1ST C.-G. Mine called me darling and sweetheart, too.

Now he's married a middle-aged shrew!

2ND C.-G. Mine found a gypsy asleep in the heather.

Now they are tramping the roads together!

3RD C.-G. Mine murdered our bastard, and now he grins

On the end of a stake for his clumsy sins.

ALL THREE. Trond of Valfjeld! Beard and Kaare!

Sleep with us, trolls, and hear our story!

PEER (*leaping amongst them*).

I'm a three-headed troll and your man for to-day.

ALL THREE. You're as sturdy as that?

PEER. You'll very soon know!

1ST C.-G. To the hut! Let us go!

2ND C.-G. We have mead!

PEER. Let it flow!

3RD C.-G. In the hut, to-night, we'll rumple the hay.

2ND C.-G. (*kissing him*).

He glows and gleams like metal—feel!

3RD C.-G. (*kissing him*).

A baby's eyes but limbs like steel!

PEER (*dancing with them*).

Gloomy forebodings, dark thoughts waking,

Laughing eyes but a heart that's breaking!

(*The three COWHERD-GIRLS cock snooks at the mountains, singing wildly.*)

ALL THREE. Trond of Valfjeld! Beard and Kaare!

You've slept with us, trolls, you've heard our story.

(*They dance away over the hills, PEER GYNT between them.*)

ACT II.—SCENE 4

SCENE: *Among the Ronde Mountains. Sunset. Glistening snow-clad peaks all around.*

PEER (*entering wild and confused*).

Castle on castle is rising!
 Look at that glistening gate!
 Stop! Will you stop! It's drifting
 Farther and farther away!
 The cock on the weather-vane's lifting
 His wings as though for a flight.
 It's melted into the blue haze,
 And the mountain is locked and barred.
 What are those trees and bracken
 That grow in the clefts of the rocks?
 They are giants with feet of herons,
 And now they are fading, too.
 The air is flecked like the rainbow,
 It's racking my eyes and mind.
 Far off, there's a sound of bells ringing,
 My eyes are weighted with lead.
 Hell! It's a dreadful throbbing,
 Like a glowing band clamped tight,
 But I can't think who the devil
 Has fastened it round my head!

(*Sinks down.*)

A ride on the Gendin Ridge,
 Romancing and silly lies!
 A climb up the sharpest rock
 With the bride—and drunk a whole day,
 Chasing away hawks and kites,
 Threatened by goblins and trolls,
 An orgy with crazy women,
 Romancing and silly lies!

(*Gazing upwards for a long time.*)

There go two golden eagles!

The wild geese are flying south!
And here am I plodding and stumbling
Knee-deep in the mud and filth.

(Jumps up.)

I'll join them! I'll wash off my sins
In a bath of the keenest winds!
I'll soar up and up, then plunge deep
In that shining christening font,
And emerge, at last, purged of vice!
I'll fly out over the meadows,
I'll fly till I'm pure of soul,
Over the salty ocean,
High above England's ¹ prince.
Yes, you may stare, you maidens,
But don't think I'm coming to you;
So you needn't trouble to wait!
Well, perhaps, I might swoop down on you.
Well, I'm damned! Those two golden eagles?
The Devil has taken them!
Look! There's the end of a gable,
And a house rising stone by stone
Out of those mouldy ruins!
And now the door's wide open!
So that's what it is! I know it!
It's my old grandfather's farm!
The rags have gone from the windows,
The palings are spruce and new,
In every room lights are blazing,
There's a banquet in the hall.
I can hear the parson tapping
His knife against his glass.
The captain flings his bottle
And smashes the mirror to bits.
Let them be lavish and squander!
Does it matter? Mother, be quiet!
Rich John Gynt is giving a party.

¹ See Act I, Scene 2, p. 23.

Hurrah for the house of Gynt!
 What's all this bustle and hubbub?
 Why all this hullabaloo?
 The captain is calling for me,
 The parson is drinking my health.
 In you go then, Peer Gynt, to the toasting,
 It rings out in clamour and song,
 Peer Gynt, you were born into greatness,
 And great you'll become before long.

(Rushes forward but hits his nose against a rock and falls senseless.)

ACT II.—SCENE 5

SCENE: *A mountain slope with great trees through which the wind is sighing. Stars are twinkling through the leaves and birds singing in the branches. A woman, dressed in green, is walking on the hillside. Behind her, comes PEER GYNT, making all sorts of amorous gestures. The woman stops and turns round.*

WOMAN. Is that true?

PEER *(drawing his finger across his throat)*.

As true as the fact that I'm Peer,
 As true as the fact that you're gracious and fair,
 Will you have me? You'll see how nice I'll be;
 You won't have to weave or spin or mend,
 You'll have lots to eat and lots more to spend,
 And I'll never, never pull your hair——

WOMAN. Nor beat me?

PEER. No, it would be unheard-of!

We sons of kings do not beat our women.

WOMAN. You're a king's son?

PEER. Yes.

WOMAN. Well, I happen to be
 The daughter of the Dovre king.

PEER. Do you now! Well, what a coincidence!

WOMAN. My father's palace is deep in the Ronde.

PEER. I feel quite sure my mother's is grander.

WOMAN. Do you know my father? His name is King Brose.

PEER. Do you know my mother? Her name is Queen Aase.

WOMAN. When my father's angry, the four winds awake.

PEER. When my mother starts scolding, the earth starts to quake.

WOMAN. My father can kick as high as a tower.

PEER. My mother can grind the rocks to flour.

WOMAN. Have you nothing to wear except rags and tatters?

PEER. It's the man inside the breeches that matters.

WOMAN. Every day I wear silk and a golden pelisse.

PEER. It looks more like tow and verdigris.

WOMAN. Ah, yes! There's one thing you must remember;

In the Ronde we see with another sense,
And everything seems to have a double
Form. When you enter my father's hall,
You might think it a hideous pile of rubble.

PEER. How peculiar! It's the same with us!

You might fancy that gold is worthless dross,
And a glittering window-pane will look
Like a bundle of stockings and dirt and moss.

WOMAN. Evil seems good and black becomes white.

PEER. Big becomes little and dull looks bright.

WOMAN (*falling on his neck*).

I see we're made for each other, Peer!

PEER. Like trousers for legs or a comb for hair.

WOMAN (*shouting over the hill*).

My wedding-steed! Come! On your back we'll leap!

(*A gigantic pig comes trotting in. Its bridle is a piece of cord, its saddle an old sacking. PEER GYNT swings himself on its back and seats the woman in front of him.*)

PEER. Heigh-ho! Through the Ronde gates we'll sweep!

Gee-up, hop-hop! My trusty sow!

WOMAN (*lovingly*).

And I was feeling so sad just now!

It goes to show that it's Fate that counts!

PEER (*whipping the pig, which trots away*).

You can tell great folk by the style of their mounts.

ACT II.—SCENE 6

SCENE: *The Royal Hall of the King of the Dovre Mountains. A great assembly of troll courtiers of all ages, sizes and descriptions. The KING is seated on his throne, wearing his crown and carrying his sceptre. His children and nearest relatives are grouped round him. PEER GYNT is facing him. A good deal of commotion.*

COURTIERS. Kill him! A Christian has dared to beguile
The Dovre king's most beautiful daughter!

YOUNG TROLL. Let me slice his fingers!

ANOTHER YOUNG TROLL. Let me pull his hair!

TROLL MAIDEN. Let me bite a great big lump from his rump!

A WITCH (*holding ladle*).

Shall we have him as porridge or in the stock-pot?

ANOTHER WITCH (*with chopper*).

Shall we eat him roasted or browned in a grill?

KING. Keep cool! (*Beckons counsellors.*)

Now it's time we stopped preening ourselves.

Our affairs, of late, have been going down-hill;

No one knows whether we'll crash or recover,

So we can't refuse help, whatever the source.

Besides, the young man has hardly a blemish,

And he's virile, too, unless I'm mistaken.

It's true he has only a single head,

But my daughter herself hasn't more than one.

Three-headed trolls are quite out of fashion;

Even two-headed ones are rare enough now,

And I'm bound to say they're not much to look at.

(*To PEER GYNT.*)

So you're after my daughter?

PEER. Your daughter and
Your kingdom thrown in as her dowry, of course.

KING. I'll give you half while I'm still alive,
You can have the rest the day I snuff out.

PEER. That's fair enough.

- KING. Wait a moment, my lad!
 You've got to make a few promises, too.
 If you break one of them our pact becomes void
 And you'll never get out of here alive.
 First of all, you must swear to wipe from your mind
 The world outside the Ronde. Avoid
 The day, its affairs, never walk in the sun.
- PEER. If I'm king that ought to be easy enough.
- KING. Secondly—now we'll see what you don't know.

(*Stands up.*)

OLDEST TROLL COURTIER (*to PEER*).

Now we'll see whether your wisdom tooth
 Can crack the nut of an old man's riddles.

KING. What's the difference between a troll and a man?

PEER. None at all, as far as I can see.

Big trolls would roast you and little trolls skin you.
 We'd do just the same if we only dared.

KING. That's true! There are numerous points of resemblance,

But morning is morning and night is night,
 And the difference is plain if you've got good sight.
 Now, I'll tell you what that difference is.

Out there, among men living under the blue,
 The saying goes, "Man, to thyself be true!"
 In the hills, we've no time for such self-righteous stuff.
 Our saying goes, "Troll, to thyself be enough."

TROLL COURTIER (*to PEER*).

Do you see it?

PEER. It seems a bit indistinct.

KING. That all-embracing "Enough," my son,
 Must be emblazoned on your coat-of-arms.

PEER (*scratching himself behind his ear*).

But—

KING. It must if you're going to be king here!

PEER. If it must, then it must. It isn't worse—

KING. Next, you must learn to adjust yourself
 To our homely, straightforward, plain way of living.

(*He beckons. Two trolls with pigs' heads and white night-caps bring food and drink.*)

Our cows give cakes and our bullocks mead;
Do not ask whether they taste sweet or sour;
The real point is, and you mustn't forget it,
The cakes are home-baked and the mead home-brewed.

PEER (*pushing the things away from him*).

To the Devil with your mysterious drinks!
I'll never get used to your country's ways.

KING. The bowl is part of the drink and it's gold.

Who takes the bowl takes my daughter, as well.

PEER (*thoughtfully*).

Well, they say we must overcome our dislikes;
I've no doubt I'll get used to the taste in time.
So here goes! (*Drinks*)

KING. That was very wisely spoken!

You spit?

PEER. That was merely force of habit.

KING. Next, you must shed your Christian clothes.

In the Dovre, I'm proud to say, everything
Is mountain-made; nothing comes from the valley
Except the silk tassel on our tails.

PEER (*angrily*).

I haven't a tail.

KING. I can give you one.

Chamberlain, fasten my Sunday tail on him.

PEER. Don't you dare! You're making a fool of me!

KING. You can't woo my child with a bare backside!

PEER. You'd turn men into beasts!

KING. My son, you're wrong!

I'm turning you into a gallant beau.

We'll give you a flame-yellow tip for your tail!

We could heap no higher honour on you.

PEER (*thoughtfully*).

Well, they say we are feathers in the wind,
And custom and fashion must carry us with them.
All right, go ahead!



You can tell great folk by the style of their mounts (Page 45)



What's the difference
between a troll
and a man (Page 47)



Take care or I'll
bring it down on
your head (Page 54)

KING. You're a wise young man.
 COURTIER. Now, see with what panache you wag it and
 whisk it.

PEER (*annoyed*).

Is there anything else I'm supposed to do?
 What about giving up my Christian faith?

KING. You can stick to that if it eases your mind.
 Belief is free; there's no tax on it.
 You can tell a troll by the cut of his coat.
 If we can agree about manners and dress,
 You may hold beliefs that would give us the creeps.

PEER. In spite of the terms that you impose,
 You're much more moderate than I expected.

KING. Alas, my son, we trolls are belied
 By our reputations, and that's another
 Distinction between you and us. However,
 The serious part of our business is ended.
 Now, we will feast our eyes and our ears.
 Harpist! Pluck gently the Dovre harp-strings!
 Dancer! Tread lightly the Dovre hall's floor!

(*Music and dancing.*)

COURTIER. How do you like it?

PEER. Like it!

KING. Speak your mind.

What do you see?

PEER. Something incredible!
 A bell-cow twanging a string with her hoof,
 A sow in short socks out of step with the discord.

COURTIERS. Eat him!

KING. Remember his standards are human.

TROLL MAIDENS. Let's lop off his ears, let's scratch out his
 eyes!

WOMAN IN GREEN (*weeping*).

Boo-hoo! To think we must put up with that!
 When my sister and I dance and play so well!

PEER. Oh dear! Was it you? I was only teasing.
 At a party everything's said in good fun.

WOMAN IN GREEN. Will you swear you were teasing?

PEER. The music and dance

Were quite entrancing, I swear they were.

KING. It's a very strange thing, this human nature;

It sticks to a man like a layer of skin.

If it's hurt in a fight—well, it leaves a scar,
But it doesn't take long for the scar to heal.

Now, my son-in-law is very compliant.

He's taken his Christian breeches off,

He's willingly drunk our bowl of mead,

And willingly fastened a tail on his rump.

So willingly has he met our demands,

That I felt convinced *Homo sapiens*

Had been chased away for ever. But no!

In double-quick time he's back again!

And so, my son, I must do what I can

To cure your peculiar human traits.

PEER. How will you do that?

KING. I'll scratch your left eye

So that you begin to see awry,

And everything that you gaze upon

Will bear the hall-mark of excellence.

Then I'll cut out your right window-pane—

PEER. Are you drunk?

KING (*putting some sharp instruments on the table*).

Here are the glazier's tools.

You'll be tamed as though you're a bull run
amok;

And then you'll see that your bride is lovely;

Your eyes will never mislead you again

With sows out-of-step and bell-cows with hoofs.

PEER. This is lunacy.

OLDEST COURTIER. It's the Troll king's decision.

He is the wise one; it's you who are mad!

KING. Think of all the annoyance and worry

You'll manage to dodge in the course of the years.

And try to remember that the eyes

Are the source of bitter, angry tears.

PEER. That's true enough and the Bible says,
 "If thy right eye offend thee pluck it out."
 Now tell me, when will my sight be restored
 To normal again?

PEER. Never, my friend!

PEER. If that's the case, I must say, "No, thank you."

KING. Then what are you going to do?

PEER. Leave at once!

KING. Indeed? Well, it's easy to get in here,
 But the Dovre king's gate doesn't open outwards.

PEER. Are you going to keep me here by force?

KING. Now listen, Prince Peer, and try to be prudent!
 Your gifts mark you out to be a troll—
 Hasn't he got the stamp and the carriage?—
 And you would like to be a troll, wouldn't you?

PEER. God knows I would! It's worth giving up
 Something to win a beautiful bride
 With a model kingdom thrown in besides.
 But there's a limit to everything.
 I've put on a tail, that's perfectly true;
 But what's to stop me from casting it off?
 I've cast off my breeches; they were old
 And torn. But what's to stop me from putting
 Them on again? And the Devil take me
 If I can't cast off your troll's way of life.
 If you like I'll swear that a cow's a maiden;
 I can always release myself from my oath.
 But to know I can never be free again;
 That I can't even die like a decent man,
 That I'll end my days like a mountain troll
 And never go home again, as the book says—
 A point which you stress so insistently—
 To that, I'm afraid, I cannot agree.

KING. Now, on my life, I'm losing my temper.
 And I'm not here to be trifled with.
 You long-legged ass! Do you know who I am?
 In the first place you're much too free with my
 daughter—

PEER. That's a lie!

KING. You'll have to marry her!

PEER. Do you dare to make out—?

KING. Can you deny
That you had a hankering after her?

PEER (*whistling*).

That's not such a serious crime, after all.

KING. Human beings are all the same.

You talk, talk, talk about your souls,
But you're much more interested in flesh.

So you think desire is of no account?

Well, you'll very soon learn to think otherwise.

PEER. You won't catch me with your bait of lies.

WOMAN IN GREEN.

By the end of the year you'll be a proud father.

PEER. Let me get out of here.

KING. We'll send you your child
Wrapped up in a goatskin.

PEER (*wiping the sweat from his forehead*).

If I could wake up!

KING. Shall we send him to your palace?

PEER. The parish!

KING. Very good, Prince Peer, it's your own concern.

But one thing is certain, what's done is done.

You'll be surprised when you see your son;

Half-breeds grow at prodigious speed.

PEER. Old man, you're as obstinate as a mule.

Dear lady, keep cool! We may yet strike a bargain.

I must make it plain that I'm neither a prince

Nor am I rich. Paint me how you like,

And I still won't be a credit to you.

KING (*looks at him with disdain, then says*)

Dash him to bits on the rocks, my sons.

YOUNG TROLLS. Mayn't we first play at Eagles and Owls?

Or the Wolf Game? Or Grey Mouse and Fierce-eyed
Puss?

KING. Well, be quick! I'm annoyed and I'm sleepy.
Good night! (*Goes.*)

PEER (*chased by YOUNG TROLLS*).

Clear off, you devils!

(*Tries to get up chimney.*)

YOUNG TROLLS. Hobgoblins, imps!

Bite him all over!

PEER. Ow!

(*Tries to get through trap-door to cellar.*)

YOUNG TROLLS. Shut all the exits.

COURTIER. They're enjoying themselves, the little dears!

PEER (*fighting with a little troll who is clinging to his ear*).

Let go, you maggot!

COURTIER (*rapping PEER over knuckles*).

You're speaking to royalty.

PEER. A rat-hole! (*Rushes towards it.*)

YOUNG TROLLS. Hobgoblins, bung up that hole!

PEER. The old man was hellish; the young ones are worse.

YOUNG TROLLS. Skin him!

PEER (*running round and round*).

If I were as small as a mouse—

YOUNG TROLLS (*swarming round him*).

Close in! We've got him!

PEER. If I were a louse—(*Falls.*)

YOUNG TROLLS. Scratch his eyes out!

PEER (*buried under a heap of trolls*).

Help, mother, they're killing me!

(*Church bells far away.*)

TROLL URCHINS. Bells in the mountains! The Black-frock's cows!

(*The trolls flee. Uproar and wild shrieks. The King's Hall collapses. Everything disappears.*)

ACT II.—SCENE 7

SCENE: *It is pitch-dark. PEER GYNT can be heard slashing out with the branch of a tree.*

PEER. Tell me! Who are you?

VOICE IN THE DARKNESS. Myself.

PEER. Move aside.

VOICE. Go round about, Peer. There's room on the mountain.

(PEER GYNT *tries to pass in another direction, but comes up against "the thing."*)

PEER. Who are you?

VOICE. Myself. Can you say the same?

PEER. I can say what I like and my sword can strike hard!
Take care or I'll bring it down on your head!
King Saul slew his hundreds; Peer Gynt slays his
thousands. (*Slashes out.*)

Who are you?

VOICE. Myself!

PEER. That's a stupid reply.

Keep it yourself. And try to be clearer.

What are you?

VOICE. The Great Boyg.

PEER. That's a bit better.

Your riddle is clearing. The black's turned to grey.
Get out of the way, Boyg!

VOICE. Go round about, Peer!

PEER. I'll go through you. (*Slashes with his branch.*)

He's fallen!

(*Tries to go forward but again comes up against "the thing."*)

Aha! There are more!

VOICE. The Boyg, Peer Gynt! There is only one.

The Boyg that's unharmed, the Boyg that was wounded.

The Boyg that is dead, the Boyg that's alive.

(PEER GYNT *throws away the branch.*)

PEER. My sword is no good; but I have my fists.

(*He hits out.*)

VOICE. Rely on your fists; have faith in your strength.

Ha-ha! Peer Gynt, then you'll reach great heights.

PEER (*returning*).

Backwards or forwards, it's just as far—

Within or without, the path is as narrow!

He's there! And he's there! He's all round. I seem

To be clear! No! A magic circle is round me!

Who are you? Show yourself! Say what you are!

VOICE. I'm the Boyg.

PEER (*feeling blindly*). Not dead nor alive, without shape,

Slimy and hazy; growling bears, half-asleep,

Seem to be swarming all over me. (*Shrieks.*)

Hit out, can't you?

VOICE. The Boyg is not mad.

PEER. Hit out!

VOICE. There's no need.

PEER. Fight! You must fight!

VOICE. The great Boyg wins but he doesn't fight.

PEER. Give me only a goblin to pinch me or sting me!

Give me only as much as a year-old troll!

Something to fight with! Not emptiness!

Ah! He's snoring! Boyg?

VOICE. Well?

PEER. Why don't you fight?

VOICE. The great Boyg gets his way by keeping the peace.

(*PEER bites his own arms and hands.*)

PEER. Give me claws and teeth to rend my flesh!

Let me feel my own blood, let me taste my own blood!

(*A sound like the wings of great birds is heard.*)

BIRDS. Is he coming, Boyg?

VOICE. Yes, foot by foot!

BIRDS. Our sisters are flying from far away!

PEER. If you want to save me, girl, do it now.

Don't stand there gazing shyly downward.

Your prayer-book! Fling it straight in his face!

BIRDS. He's weakening!

VOICE. We've got him!

BIRDS. Sisters, make haste!

PEER. Such an hour of racking strife
Is too much to pay for life. (*Sinks down.*)

BIRDS. Boyg, he's fallen! Seize him! Seize him now!

(*Church bells and the singing of hymns is heard in the distance.*)

BOYG (*with a gasp, as his voice gradually fades away*).

He was too strong! He was shielded by women.

ACT II.—SCENE 8

SCENE: Dawn. On the mountain-side outside AASE'S hut. The door is closed. The place is silent and deserted. PEER GYNT is asleep, lying by the side of the wall. He wakes, looks around him with dull, listless eyes, then spits.

PEER. What would I give for a pickled herring!

(*He spits again. At the same time he sees HELGA approaching and carrying a basket of food.*)

Hi, little 'un, what are you doing here?

HELGA. Solveig—

PEER (*springing up*). Where is she?

HELGA. Behind the hut.

SOLVEIG (*hidden*). If you come over here, I'll run away!

PEER (*stopping*). Are you still afraid I might cuddle you?

SOLVEIG. You're shameless!

PEER. Do you know where I was last night?

The Dovre king's daughter was chasing me!

SOLVEIG. Then we did right to ring the church bells.

PEER. Peer Gynt's not the sort who's so easily caught.

Well, say something!

HELGA (*crying*). Oh, she's running away!

(*Runs after her.*)

Wait!

PEER (*catching her by the arm*).

Look what I've got in my pocket here!

A silver button! I'll give it to you

If you'll say a good word for me!

HELGA. Please let me go!

PEER. Here it is.

HELGA. Let me go. Here is the basket!

PEER. If you don't, God help—

HELGA. You're hurting! Please let me—

PEER (*quietly, letting her go*).

I meant no harm; beg her not to forget me!

(*Helga runs away.*)

ACT III.—SCENE I

SCENE: *In the depths of the pine forest. A grey autumn day. Snow is falling. PEER GYNT is in his shirt-sleeves, felling the trees. He is hacking at a tall fir with crooked branches.*

PEER. Oh yes, you're tough, my dear old friend!
But it won't avail you; your days are numbered.

(*Starts hacking again.*)

I know you're wearing a coat of mail,
But I'll pierce it through, strong as it is.
Oh yes, you can shake your twisted arms;
You're resentful and angry. I understand.
But I'm going to make you fall to your knees—!

(*Breaks off suddenly.*)

More lies! This is no hero in armour;
More lies! It's nothing but an old tree,
Only a fir with its bark all cracked.
It's heavy work, this timber-felling,
But it's worse when you muddle it up with day-dreams.
They must stop, these wonderful cloudy flights

To an airy world that never was.
You're an outlaw, my lad, a forest outlaw.

(Hacks away for a time in a great hurry.)

Yes, a fugitive! You've no mother now
To lay your table and bring you your food.
If you want to eat you must help yourself,
Hunt in the forest and fish in the streams,
Chop your own wood and light your own fire,
Build your own house and set it in order.
You want warm clothes? You must kill a reindeer.
You want your own house? You must break the stones.
You want oak beams? You must saw the wood
And carry it home on your own broad back.

(Lowers his axe and stares straight in front of him.)

I'll build myself a thing of beauty,
With a tower and a weather-vane;
And on the gable-end I will carve
A mermaid with a long swishing tail.
The weather-vane and the locks will be
Embossed with brass. I might get some glass
For the windows: and strangers far off will gape
And wonder at the glory of it.

(Laughing uncomfortably.)

Romancing and lies! I'm at it again.
You're an outlaw!

(Starts working again with a new relish.)

A hut with a decent roof
Will keep out the rain as well as the frost.

(Looks up at the tree.)

He's beginning to totter. One more blow!
He's fallen! He's prostrate at my feet.
The young trees are trembling all around.

*(Begins to lop off the branches: suddenly, he stops and listens,
his axe upraised.)*

There's someone after me! Can it be

The old man from Heggstad trying his tricks?
(Crouches behind a tree and peeps out cautiously.)
 A boy! Just a lad! He seems afraid;
 So furtive, too. What's that he's hidden
 Under his jacket? A sickle? He's peering
 All round him. He's putting his hand on a branch.
 What's he doing now? He's so still, so tense. . . .
 Oh, horrible! He's chopped his finger off!
 Right off! And he's bleeding like an ox.
 He's running off with a rag round his hand.

(Goes nearer.)

This is the very Devil! A finger!
 Right off! And he did it deliberately.
 Aha! Now I see! It's a certain way
 Of keeping out of the King's Service.
 That must be it! They wanted him to fight
 And he had his own ideas about war.
 But to chop it off—! To maim himself—!
 Think about it, yes; have the wish, the intention.
 But do it! No! That is beyond me.

(He shakes his head, then carries on with his work.)

ACT III.—SCENE 2

SCENE: *A room in AASE's house. It is in a state of confusion. The chest is empty; clothes are scattered about all over the room; a cat is lying on the bed. AASE and the cottar's wife, KARI, are doing their best to tidy up.*

AASE *(hurrying to one side of the room).*

Kari, listen!

KARI. What's the matter?

AASE *(at far end of room).*

Where is—

I wonder where— Tell me. Tell me where—

What am I looking for? I'm going mad!

Where is the key to the chest?

KARI.

In the keyhole.

AASE. What is that rumbling?

KARI. It's the last load

Going to Heggstad.

AASE (*weeping*). If only they were

Carrying me out in my coffin!

What we poor creatures have to put up with!

Have mercy, God! The whole house cleaned out!

What Heggstad forgot, the bailiffs have taken.

They've left me barely a rag to my back.

It's disgusting that people can be so harsh!

(*Sits on edge of bed.*)

The farm and the land have gone for good.

Old Heggstad was hard but the law was harder.

Not a soul would help me; not one showed pity;

My Peer away, no one to advise me.

KARI. This house is yours till the day you die.

AASE. Bread of Charity for me and my cat!

KARI. God help you! You've got Peer to thank for all this!

AASE. Peer? I'm afraid you're getting muddled!

Ingrid got home safe enough in the end.

They'd have shown more sense if they'd blamed the
Devil;

He's the offender and no one else.

The Father of Lies tempted my poor boy!

KARI. Wouldn't it be best to send for the parson?

You may be even worse than you think.

AASE. Send for the parson? I suppose I should.

(*Gets up.*)

But, O God! No, I can't! I'm the boy's own mother!

I must help him! It's my sacred duty.

They've all deserted me. Let me do

What I can. They've left him this coat. I'll patch

It up. Would to God I'd dared filch the rug!

Where are the stockings?

KARI. With that pile of rubbish.

AASE (*rummaging in pile of rubbish*).

What's this we've got here? Oh yes, it's an old

Casting ladle. It was one of his toys.
 He used to smelt buttons and mould them with it.
 One day, at a party, my Peer marched in
 And asked his father for a piece of tin.
 "Not tin," said my husband; "I'll give you silver;
 King Christian's coin for the son of John Gynt!"
 God pardon him, he was in such a state
 That he couldn't distinguish between tin and gold.
 Here are the stockings. They're full of holes.
 I must darn them, Kari.

KARI. It won't be too soon.

AASE. When I've finished them I'm going to bed.
 I'm tired out and I feel so sick and ill.

(*Gleefully.*)

Look, Kari! Two shirts! They've forgotten to take
 them.

KARI. So they have!

AASE. Well, that's a bit of good luck!

I think I can safely keep one of them here.

No! I don't see why we shouldn't keep both.

The one he's wearing is quite threadbare.

KARI. But, goodness! Aase, you know that's a sin.

AASE. I do know. I also know that repentance
 Absolves us from sin. Well, I'll repent!

ACT III.—SCENE 3

SCENE: *Outside a newly built hut in the forest. Reindeer antlers
 over the door. The snow is piled high. It is dusk. PEER
 GYNT is standing outside the door and fastening a large wooden
 bolt. Now and again he stops and laughs.*

PEER. I must fix a bolt; a bolt to secure
 The door against trolls, against men and women.
 I must fix a bolt, a bolt to keep out
 The venomous breed of hobgoblins.
 They come when night falls; they knock and they rap,

Open, Peer Gynt, we're as nimble as thoughts!
 We'll crawl under the bed, rake about in the ashes,
 Blow down the chimney like flaming dragons.
 Hee-hee! Peer Gynt, do you think nails or boards
 Can shut out evil hobgoblin thoughts?

(SOLVEIG enters on skis. She has come across the moor; she wears a shawl and is carrying a bundle in her hand.)

SOLVEIG. God speed your work! Please don't send me away.
 You sent and I came. And now I am yours.

PEER. Solveig! No, it can't be—! Yes, it is—!
 And you're not afraid to come so close!

SOLVEIG. You sent a message with little Helga;
 Others came, too, with the wind and the silence.
 There were messages in your mother's words,
 Messages in my crowded dreams.
 The long, long nights and the empty days
 Brought me the message that I must come.
 Down there, the joy had gone out of life;
 Laughter and tears were denied to me.
 I did not know what was in your mind.
 I only knew what I should and must do.

PEER. But your father—?

SOLVEIG. In the whole wide world
 I've no one now to call father or mother.
 I have left them for ever.

PEER. Solveig, my precious!
 All this for me?

SOLVEIG. Yes, for you alone.
 You must be all to me, my friend, my life.

(Crying.)

It was worst to part from my little sister,
 And even worse to leave my father,
 But worst of all to leave her who had
 Carried me in her arms at her breast.
 No, God forgive me, by far the worst
 Was the sorrow of leaving them all—yes, all.

- PEER. Do you know the sentence they passed on me?
How they even took my inheritance?
- SOLVEIG. It was not for your goods nor your chattels
That I parted from those I loved so much.
- PEER. Do you know the rest? My life is at stake
If anyone captures me outside this forest.
- SOLVEIG. I came on snow-shoes. I asked my way here.
They said, "Where are you going?" I answered
"Home."
- PEER. Then away with nails and bars and boards!
I need no bolts to protect me from
Hobgoblin thoughts. If you dare to dwell
With me here, my hut will be sanctified.
Let me look at you, Solveig! No, not too near!
Let me gaze on you, you're so pure and fair!
Let me carry you, you're so slender and light!
May I carry you, Solveig? I'll never tire!
I will not soil you. I'll hold you away
From me. You're so lovely, so warm! Who would
Have thought I could make you love me?
How I have longed for you, night and day!
Look! I built this! Hewed the timber, too.
It's coming down! It's too small and mean——
- SOLVEIG. Little or big, I love it; it's yours.
It's so easy to breathe in the wind up here.
The valley was stifling. I felt entombed.
That was one reason why I came away.
But here, I can hear the sighing pines—
Silence and song—here, I am at home.
- PEER. And are you quite sure? It will be for ever.
- SOLVEIG. I have come to you. There is no way back.
- PEER. Then you're mine! Go in! Let me see you inside.
Go in! I will get some logs for a fire.
It will soon be snug and bright and warm.
It will always be cosy. You'll never be cold.

(He opens the door. SOLVEIG enters. He stands still for a moment, then laughs and leaps with joy.)

My king's daughter! I've found her and won her at last!

Now, a king's palace shall rise from the ground.

(He takes up his axe and begins to move away. An elderly WOMAN, dressed in a tattered green dress, approaches him from the pine-wood. An UGLY BOY with a flask in his hand lumps after her, holding her by the dress.)

WOMAN. Good evening, Peer Nimblefoot!

PEER. What? Who's that?

WOMAN. Old friends, Peer Gynt! My house is near by.
We're neighbours.

PEER. Are we? That's news to me.

WOMAN. As your hut was built, mine rose at its side.

PEER *(trying to go)*.

I'm in a hurry—

WOMAN. You always were.

But I'll plod along and still keep you in sight.

PEER. You've made a mistake.

WOMAN. Oh no! I did once . . .

When you made me your marvellous promises.

PEER. Promises? I? What the Hell do you mean?

WOMAN. That evening you came and drank with my father—
Have you forgotten?

PEER. What never happened!

What is all this? When did we meet last?

WOMAN. The last time we met was the first time we met.

(To the boy.)

Your father's thirsty. Give him a drink.

PEER. Father? Are you drunk? Are you trying to say—

WOMAN. You can always tell a pig by its skin!

Where are your eyes? Can't you see he's as crooked
In the shanks as you are in the mind?

PEER. Are you trying—

WOMAN. Are you trying to wriggle out?

PEER. This long-legged brat—

WOMAN. He has grown very quickly.

PEER. You old witch, do you dare to tell me that I—



It's an old casting ladle, one of his toys. (Page 61)



Go in! I will get some logs for a fire. (Page 63)

WOMAN. Listen, Peer Gynt, you're as crude as an ox!

(*Crying.*)

Is it my fault if I'm not as fair as I was
That day you enticed me out on the hills?
Last autumn, when my labour began,
The only doctor there was the Devil,
So it's not very strange that my looks all went.
If you want to see me as fair as before,
You need only show that girl there the door,
Put her out of your mind and out of your sight;
Do that, my dear, and my looks will return.

PEER. Get away, you old hag!

WOMAN. You'll see if I do!

PEER. I'll split your skull open——

WOMAN. You try if you dare!

Oh no, Peer Gynt, I can stand hard knocks.
I'll come back here every single day.
I'll open the door and spy on you both.
When you're sitting in the fireside glow,
And you want to love her and kiss and embrace,
I'll be at your side in my rightful place.
We'll share you. We'll take it in turns in your bed.
Farewell, my dear Peer, now go and get wed!

PEER. You hell-fiend!

WOMAN. Oh dear, I nearly forgot!

You'll have to bring up your son, you wretch!
Go along, little devil, go to your father.

CHILD (*spitting*).

I'll brain you with my axe. You wait! Just you wait.

WOMAN (*kissing the child*).

Oh dear! What a head he has on his shoulders!
You'll be daddy's double when you grow up!

PEER (*stamping*).

I wish you as far——

WOMAN. Away as we're near?

PEER (*clenching fists*).

And all this——

I would still be holding her too close to me
 To put her down again pure as before.
 No, no, I must find my way round about,
 Not for gain nor for loss but only to cleanse
 Myself from things that are best forgotten.

(Moves a few paces, then stops.)

Go in after this? So foul and smirched?
 Go in with this retinue of trolls;
 Speak but be silent, confess yet conceal?

(Throws his axe away.)

It's a holy day; to go to her now
 As I am would be nothing but sacrilege.

SOLVEIG *(in doorway)*.

Are you coming?

PEER *(half to himself)*. Go round about.

SOLVEIG.

What?

PEER.

You must wait.

It's dark here and I've a heavy load.

SOLVEIG. Wait! Let me help! I will come and share it.

PEER. No, stay where you are. I must manage myself.

SOLVEIG. Well, don't be too long!

PEER.

Be patient, dear.

No matter how long I may be——

SOLVEIG *(nodding)*.

I will wait.

(He goes into the forest. SOLVEIG remains standing in the half-open door.)

ACT III.—SCENE 4

SCENE: AASE's room. Evening. A log-fire lights the room. The cat is on the chair at the foot of the bed. AASE is in bed and is plucking restlessly at the sheets.

AASE. Lord God, will he never come back here?
 The hours drag on endlessly.
 I can't even send a message

And I have so much to say.
 There's no time to be lost, not a moment.
 So soon! It has come so soon!
 I only wish I could feel that
 I've not been too strict with him.

PEER (*entering*).

Good evening!

AASE. Is that Peer? Thank God!

Here at last, my own dear boy!
 It's an awful risk you're running,
 Your life is in danger here.

PEER. My life? What does my life matter?
 I felt I must see you at once.

AASE. Well, you've given the lie to Kari.
 I can leave you now in peace.

PEER. Leave me? What's this you're saying?
 Where are you going then?

AASE. Ah, Peer! My time's nearly over.
 I'm not very long for this world.

PEER (*turning away and walking across the room*).
 There! I thought I was flying from trouble;
 Here, at least, I thought I'd be free.
 Are you cold? Your feet? And your hands?

AASE. Yes, Peer; it will soon be over.
 When you notice my eyes grow dim,
 You must close them very gently.
 Then, you must see to my coffin;
 It must be a good one, dear.
 No; of course not——

PEER. Please be quiet!
 There's time to think of all that.

AASE. Yes, yes. (*Looks restlessly round room.*)
 Do you see how much
 They've left us? It's just like them.

PEER (*turning sharply*).
 Again!

(*Harshly.*) I know it was my fault.
 There's no point in reminding me.

AASE. You! No, it was that damned liquor.
That's the cause of all the fuss.
You were drunk, my boy, my dear boy.
You didn't know what you were doing.
And that dreadful ride on the reindeer!
No wonder you were so strange!

PEER. Yes, yes, let's forget all that nonsense.
Let's forget the whole damned thing.
Let's store up all our sorrows
Till later, some other day.

(Sitting down on edge of bed.)

Now, let's have a nice long talk
About this, that and everything.
Let's forget what's sad or unpleasant.
Why, look! There's our dear old pussy!
Still alive! After all this time!

AASE. At night she seems so restless.
You know what that means, don't you?

PEER *(changing the subject)*.
Is there any local gossip?

AASE *(smiling)*.
They say there's a girl in the district
Who's pining for the heights——

PEER *(quickly)*.
And Mads Moen, is he settling down?

AASE. They say that she pays no heed
To the old folks' tears and prayers.
You ought to pay them a visit.
You might be helpful to them.

PEER. And the smith? What's Aslak doing?

AASE. Don't speak about that filthy smith.
I'd rather tell you her name. . . .
The girl is—you know—her name is——

PEER. Now let's have our nice long talk,
About this, that and everything,
Except what's sad or unpleasant.
Are you thirsty? I'll bring some water.

Have you room to stretch yourself?
 That bed seems so small. Why, it must
 Be the bed I had when a boy.
 Every evening you used to sit
 On the edge and tuck me in,
 And sing me your lullabies.
 Sometimes, you would call the cattle
 Home again. Do you remember?

AASE. Yes, yes. And do you remember
 How we used to play at sledges
 When your father had gone away?
 A blanket was our sledge-apron.
 The floor was an ice-bound fjord.

PEER. Yes, yes, but do you remember
 What was the best thing of all?
 Our fiery Arab horses . . . !

AASE. As though I could ever forget it!
 It was Kari's cat we borrowed.
 We perched her up on the stool——

PEER. And drove away up hill and down dale
 To Soria-Moria Castle,
 The castle that's west of the moon,
 The castle that's east of the sun.
 A stick you found in a corner
 Of the cupboard was your whip.

AASE. I sat in front like the driver.

PEER. Yes, you let the reins go loose
 And turned round as we went along
 And asked me if I were cold.
 Bless you, you ugly old beauty,
 You were always a loving soul—!
 Why are you moaning?

AASE. My back, dear,
 It's aching on these hard boards.

PEER. Sit up then, and let me hold you. . . .
 There now! That's more comfortable.

AASE (*uneasily*).

I want Him to take me, Peer.

- PEER. Take you?
- AASE. I'm longing to get away.
- PEER. Wrap yourself up in the bedclothes.
I'll sit on the edge of the bed
And we'll while away the evening.
I'll sing as you once sang to me.
And I'll call the cattle home.
- AASE. Please, Peer, will you bring my prayer-book?
I'm uneasy in my mind.
- PEER. In Soria-Moria Castle,
King and Prince are giving a feast.
Now lie back upon your pillow,
I'm going to drive you there.
- AASE. But, Peer dear, am I invited?
- PEER. Yes, both of us will be there.

(He throws a piece of string round the cat's chair, takes a stick in his hand and sits on the end of the bed.)

- Gee-up! Look alive there, Blackie!
Mother, you're not cold, are you?
Ah! Now, we're making headway.
Grane's got into her stride.
- AASE. Peer dear, I can hear bells ringing.
- PEER. The glittering sledge-bells, dear!
- AASE. It's a ghostly hollow clanging.
- PEER. We're driving over a fjord.
- AASE. Peer, I'm frightened. What's that sighing?
And that eerie whispering?
- PEER. It's only the pine-trees, mother,
Murmuring on the hills.
- AASE. Lights are gleaming in the distance.
Can you see where they're coming from?
- PEER. From the windows of the castle.
Can you hear them dancing?
- AASE. Yes.
- PEER. On guard, outside, stands Saint Peter.
He's inviting you straight inside.
- AASE. Is he greeting me?

- PEER. Yes, with honour,
And he's offering you sweet wine.
- AASE. Has he cakes to give me with it?
- PEER. He has! A plateful of them.
And our parson's wife is making
Your coffee and your dessert.
- AASE. Oh, God! Am I going to meet her?
- PEER. If you want to, dear, of course.
- AASE. You're driving your poor old mother
To a lovely party, Peer.
- PEER (*cracking his whip*).
Gee-up! Look alive there, Blackie!
- AASE. Are you sure you're on the right road?
- PEER (*cracking whip again*).
It's an easy road to follow.
- AASE. But the journey's long and tiring.
- PEER. The castle is there before us.
We'll be inside very soon.
- AASE. I'll lie back and close my eyes now
And trust to you, my own boy.
- PEER. Put your best foot forward, Grane.
There's a huge crowd in the grounds.
They are clamouring at the entrance.
Peer Gynt and his mother are here!
What was that, Mister Saint Peter?
My mother may not come in?
You'd search far and wide, let me tell you,
And not find so honest a soul.
I'll leave myself out of the counting;
I can go back the way I came.
If you ask me, well, I'd stay here.
If not, well, I'd still be content.
I have told as many whoppers
As the Father of Lies himself.
I've called my mother an old hen
Because she cackled and clucked,
But you must esteem and honour
And please her and make her happy.

You won't find anyone better
 In our part of the world these days.
 Ho-ho, there is God-the-Father!
 Saint Peter, you're in for it now.

(In a deep voice.)

"Stop being so high and mighty!
 Mother Aase is welcome here."

(Laughs aloud and turns to his mother.)

There you are! What did I tell you?
 Saint Peter has piped down already.

(Anxiously.)

Mother, what is it? Tell me,
 Have you gone clean out of your mind?

(Goes to head of bed.)

Don't stare at me like that, mother!
 Say something! It's Peer, your boy!

(Tenderly feels her forehead and hands. Then he throws the string on to the chair and says in a low voice:)

Well, you can rest now, Grane.
 The journey has come to an end.

(Closes her eyes and bends over her.)

Thank you, dear, for all you gave me,
 The thrashings and kisses, too.
 But, now, you must thank me also.

(Presses his cheek against her mouth.)

That was your fare for the drive.

KARI *(entering).*

What? Peer! Well, you've put an end
 To her sorrow and suffering.
 Dear God, she is sleeping soundly—
 Or is she—?

PEER.

Ssh! Ssh! She is dead.

(KARI weeps beside the corpse. PEER GYNT walks up and down the room for a long time. He stops near the bed.)

See that she's buried with honour.

I must get away from here.

KARI. Are you going far?

PEER. Yes, to sea.

KARI. So far?

PEER. Yes, and farther still.

ACT IV.—SCENE I

SCENE: *The south-west coast of Morocco. A table is set for dinner in a palm-grove, under an awning. Palm-matting on the ground. Further back hammocks are hanging. A steam-yacht is lying offshore, flying the Norwegian and American flags. A jolly-boat is drawn up on the shore. Just before sunset. PEER GYNT, good-looking and middle-aged, is in an elegant travelling suit; gold-mounted eyeglasses are pinned to his coat. He is at the head of the table. MR. COTTON, MONSIEUR BALLON, HERR VON EBERKOPF and HERR TRUMPETERSTRAALE are dining with him.*

PEER. Drink, gentlemen! If man was made
For pleasure let him have his fill.
They say that what is gone is gone.
The Past is past. What will you have?

TRUMPETERSTRAALE.

You're a host of hosts, dear brother Gynt.

PEER. Let my money share the honour
With my cook and steward.

COTTON. Very well!

A toast to all the four of us!

M. BALLON. Monsieur, yours is a *gødt*, a *ton*
That nowadays is rarely found

In bachelors living *en garçon*—

There's something which I can't define—

V. EBERKOPF. It's in that fine wave of the hand!

A mirror of emancipation,

Spiritual meditation,

And citizenship of the world,

Vision that can pierce the clouds,

A mind devoid of prejudice

But tinged with higher criticism;

Ur—natur, real knowledge of life;

These admirable traits all bound

Into an all-embracing whole.

Isn't that what you meant, monsieur?

BALLON. Yes, very possibly; although

In French it sounds much less high-flown.

EBERKOPF. *Ei was*, your tongue is limited.

But we are looking for the cause

Of this phenomenon—

PEER. It's found.

Gentlemen, I am not married;

That will explain everything.

What is our duty? Well, in brief,

A man should always be himself,

Without reserve, devote himself

To himself and what concerns him.

What chance has he of doing this

If he's burdened like a camel

With someone else's joys and sorrows?

EBERKOPF. This being everything to yourself—

Surely you've had to fight for it?

PEER. I've had to fight unendingly,

But I have always managed to

Emerge with honour, although there

Was one occasion when I nearly

Tripped up. I was a gay young rip;

The lady whom I thought I loved

Boasted a royal lineage.

BALLON. Royalty?

PEER (*carelessly*). One of those families—
You must have met them—

TRUMP. (*thumping the table*). Blue-blooded fools—

PEER (*shrugging his shoulders*).

With outworn pedigrees, whose pride
Aimed at keeping their escutcheons
Free from any plebeian smudge.

COTTON. What happened? Did it peter out?

BALLON. The family opposed the match?

PEER. The contrary.

BALLON. Ah!

PEER (*coolly*). Well, you'll smile!

Matters became so compromising
That it was deemed advisable
That we should marry there and then.
But, candidly, from first to last,
I found the matter most unwholesome.
In many ways I'm finicky.
I like to stand on my own feet.
So when her father started hinting
Demands that he thought right and proper,
Such as—that I should change my name
And my position and join his set,
Together with a good deal more
I could not and would not accept—
Well, I turned down his ultimatum,
Withdrew with proper dignity
And released my blossoming bride.

(*Drums on the table and adopts a pious air.*)

Yes, yes; Fate is there to guide us.

Humanity can depend on it.

And it's a comfort, I can tell you.

BALLON. And did the matter end with that?

PEER. Oh no, it went a good deal further.

Others got mixed up in the business.

There was an outcry; younger members

Of the family demanded

Satisfaction. I fought duels

With no fewer than seven of them.
I'll remember that until I die.
But, once more, I emerged with honour;
Blood flowed, of course, but that same blood
Confirmed my lion's reputation
And stressed, what I have pointed out,
That Fate is always there to guide us.

EBERKOPF. Your outlook upon life has raised you
To the ranks of the great thinkers.
While most people can only view
Each scene disjointed from the whole,
And do not see the panorama,
You have a comprehensive range.
Your norm embraces everything;
Your rules of life are like the rays
Proceeding from a central sun,
The core of deepest meditation.
And yet you tell us you're untutored.

PEER. I am, as I've already mentioned,
A simple man, self-educated.
There was no method in my schooling,
But I have thought and speculated
And read a good deal on most subjects.
Unfortunately, I did not start
Until I was well past my youth;
And then, of course, it's heavy work
Ploughing along, page after page,
Trying to take in everything.
I learned my history in fits
And starts. I had no time for more
Concentrated study; and then,
As we need something to fall back
Upon when our affairs don't prosper,
I took to religion bit by bit.
In that way it was easier
To swallow—like a sugared pill.
There's no point in too much reading;
Pick out what can be used—that's all.

COTTON. That's practical, at least.

PEER (*lighting a cigar*). My friends,

Consider my career. When first
I went out west I was a pauper ;
My hands were empty and I had
To labour for my daily bread.
Believe me, it was difficult.
But life is sweet and death is bitter !
Well, Fortune was accomodating
And Destiny was very kind.
I learned for I was pliable.
Things went well and then went better.
Ten years later I had become
A Croesus among Charleston traders ;
My fame had spread from port to port ;
My ships were harbingers of luck.

COTTON. What was your trade?

PEER. Black ivory !

Sending slaves to Carolina
And shipping images to China.

BALLON. *Fi donc !*

TRUMP. You're joking, Uncle Gynt !

PEER. No doubt you think the business hovered
On the verge of what was lawful.
I felt it too, felt it intensely.
In fact, it became odious.
But, once begun, I can assure you
It wasn't easy to wind up.
And anyhow, an undertaking
Of such enormous size, involving
Thousands, could hardly be wound up
Without calamitous results.
I always loathed winding things up.
On the other hand, I must confess
I've always had a keen respect
For what we call the consequences,
And when obliged to go beyond
The law I've always felt unhappy.

Moreover, I was growing older,
 I was getting near the fifties
 And my hair was going grey.
 My health was excellent and yet
 One thought was always uppermost:
 "Who knows how soon my hour will come?
 How soon will judgment be pronounced
 And the sheep parted from the goats?"
 What could I do? To stop the trade
 With China was impossible.
 I found a way! I soon arranged
 Other interests in China.
 I still sent idols every spring,
 But every autumn I despatched
 Missionaries well equipped
 With all essentials for conversion—
 Stockings and Bibles, rum and rice

COTTON. At a good profit!

PEER. Naturally!

What's more, it worked. My missionaries
 Laboured. For every idol bought
 They had a coolie well baptized.
 They worked like Hell and, more or less,
 Offset my idols. They never ceased
 To try to catch up on the hordes
 Of idols we distributed.

COTTON. And what about your trade in negroes?

PEER. Once more my moral feelings gained
 The day. I knew it was no trade
 For people of advancing years.
 You never know when you might die.
 Besides, there were the thousand snares
 Laid by our dear philanthropists;
 The ship might be seized any day.
 There was the risk of wind and weather.
 Thoughts of this sort made me decide.
 "Peter," I said, "take in your sails.
 See that your errors are made good."

And so, I bought land in the South,
Kept back my last cargo of meat,
Whose quality, by the way, was prime,
And settled them upon the land.
They flourished, soon grew fat and sleek
And were a veritable credit
To themselves and me. Without
Boasting, I may say that I
Was like a father to them all.
Profits were good. I built them schools
So that their morals might be kept
At a *niveau* of excellence.
There was the strictest supervision
To prevent any back-sliding.
Eventually, I withdrew
From these activities. I sold
The plantation, lock, stock and barrel,
And, as a parting gift, I gave
To everybody, big and little,
A measure of grog gratis till
Each man and woman had had his fill.
The widows got snuff, in addition.
And so, in all sincerity,
I trust the text which says that he
Who does no evil does some good
Is not all eyewash and that my sins
Are now redeemed. I think I can
State with much more truth than most
That my good deeds cancel my errors.

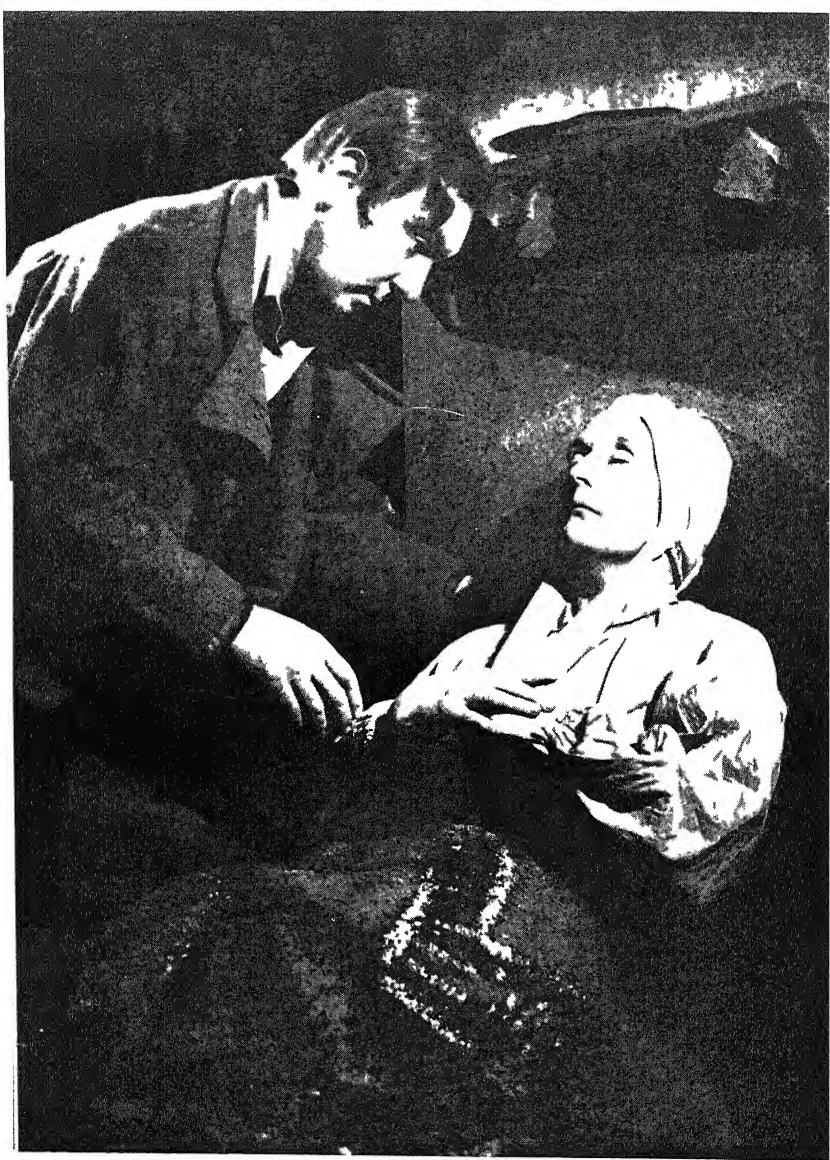
EBERKOPF (*clinking glasses with him*).

It's really edifying to hear
A plan of life so practical,
Unhampered by dim theories,
Oblivious of unrest without.

(*During his last speech PEER GYNT has been diligently applying himself to the bottle.*)



Gee up! Look alive there, Blackie! (Page 71)



The journey has come to an end. (Page 73)

PEER. We Northerners learned long ago
 Never to trust to half-measures.
 The key to living is simply this:
 Keep your ear closed tight against
 The venom of a dangerous viper.

COTTON. What sort of viper, my dear friend?

PEER. A little one who tempts you to
 Make moves from which you can't draw back.

(*Drinks again.*)

Every one can act with courage
 And keep his nerve as long as he
 Fights to avoid life's many snares,
 Fights with the knowledge that the day
 Of battle is not the final one,
 And keeps behind him an open bridge
 Which he can cross to safer country.
 That policy has kept me going
 And has coloured my behaviour.
 It's a family heritage
 Picked up in my early childhood.

BALLON. You're a Norwegian, aren't you?

PEER. Yes,

By birth, but cosmopolitan
 As anyone by inclination.
 For the prosperity I've tasted
 I have to thank America.
 My well-stocked library derives
 From Germany's most modern scholars.
 From France I get my style in clothes,
 My manners and my pretty wit;
 From England a bent for industry
 Together with a sharpened sense
 Of what is for my own advantage.
 The Jew has taught me to be patient.
 In Italy I soon acquired
 A love for *dolce far niente*,

And once, when in a nasty corner,
I saved my bacon with the help
Of Swedish steel.

TRUMP. (*lifting his glass*). Yes, Swedish steel!

EBERKOPF. Let us pay homage to the man
Who wields a sword with such success.

(*They clink glasses and drink. PEER GYNT is getting flushed with wine.*)

COTTON. What you have said is most absorbing.
But, sir, I am interested
In knowing what you hope to do
With all your money.

PEER. Hm! Do with it?

ALL FOUR (*drawing nearer*).

Yes, let's hear!

PEER. Well, in the first place,
I'm going to travel. That is why
I took you on board at Gibraltar.
I need travelling companions,
Priests who will dance attendance at
My Altar of the Golden Calf.

EBERKOPF. How very witty!

COTTON. But no one
Sails just for a cruise alone.
You have a purpose, surely, and
That purpose is . . . ?

PEER. To be Emperor!

ALL FOUR. What?

PEER (*nods*). Emperor.

ALL FOUR. Where?

PEER. Of the whole world.

BALLON. But how, my friend?

PEER. By the power of gold!

The idea is by no means new.
It has inspired me throughout life.
As a boy I used to dream and soar

Over the oceans on a cloud.
 I'd fly adorned in silk and gold
 And then I'd drop down on all-fours.
 But, my friends, the goal was always there.
 Someone or other said somewhere,
 I really can't remember where,
 That if you gain the whole earth but
 Lose your own self your gain would be
 A crown upon a grinning skull.
 That's what he said—or something like it—
 And—well—they are not idle words.

EBERKOPF. Tell me, what is the Gyntian "self"?

PEER. The world that's here inside my head;
 That makes me "me" and no one else,
 No more than God could be the Devil.

TRUMP. Now I see what you're aiming at.

BALLON. Sublime thinker!

EBERKOPF. A great poet!

PEER (*with increasing emotion*).

The Gyntian self—it is an army
 Of wishes, hankerings, desires;
 The Gyntian self—it is a sea
 Of fancies, cravings and dictates.
 It's all that swells within my breast,
 It's all that makes me live the life
 I live. It's all that makes me "me."
 But, as our Lord needed the earth
 To make himself God of the Earth,
 So I, Peer Gynt, have need of gold
 To make myself an Emperor.

BALLON. But you're rolling in it.

PEER. Not
 Enough except for a short reign
 Of one or two days as a Duke
A la Lippe-Detmold; that's all.
 No, I must be myself, *en bloc*.
 I want to be Gynt everywhere,
 Sir Peter Gynt from top to toe.

BALLON (*enraptured*).

And own the world's most beautiful
Treasures.

EBERKOPF. Such as cellars of
Century-old Johannisburger.

TRUMP. Every weapon of Charles the Twelfth.

COTTON. But first, the opportunity
Of bigger profits.

PEER. I think that chance
Has come while we've been anchored here.
This evening, we are steering north.
The papers that were brought aboard
Have given me important news.

(*Rises and lifts his glass.*)

It shows that Fortune always helps
Those who always help themselves.

ALL FOUR. What?
What's happened?

PEER. Greece is in a ferment.

ALL FOUR (*jumping to their feet*).
What? The Greeks?

PEER. Yes, they have risen.

ALL FOUR. Hurrah!

PEER. The Turks are in a mess.

(*Empties his glass.*)

BALLON. To Greece! The path to glory's there!
I'll help them with the sword of France!

EBERKOPF. I'll urge them on—but at a distance!

COTTON. I'll urge them on—with a big contract!

TRUMP. Forward! In Bender I will find
The far-famed spurs of Charles the Twelfth.

BALLON (*falling on PEER's neck*).

My friend, forgive me. For a time
I misunderstood your motives.

EBERKOPF (*pressing his hand*).

I, the fool, thought you a rogue.

COTTON. Too strong. I thought you were obtuse.

TRUMP (*trying to kiss him*).

And I, my uncle, summed you up

As the lowest type of Yankee—!

Forgive me!

EBERKOPF. We were all mistaken.

PEER. I don't follow you.

EBERKOPF. Now we see

The splendour of the Gyntian army

Of wishes, hankerings, desires.

BALLON (*admiringly*).

Monsieur Gynt! That's what you meant!

EBERKOPF (*also admiringly*).

This is an honourable Gynt!

PEER. But tell me—?

BALLON. Don't you understand?

PEER. Understand? I'm damned if I do.

BALLON. You're going to assist the Greeks

With money and your fleet of ships!

PEER (*whistling*).

No, thanks, I believe that might is right.

I'll lend my money to the Turks.

BALLON. You can't!

EBERKOPF. Amusing! A good joke!

(PEER GYNT *is silent for a while, then he leans against a chair and adopts an air of superiority.*)

PEER. Listen, gentlemen, the last shred

Of our friendship is dissolving;

It's best that we should part at once.

The man who has nothing to lose

Can gamble anything he likes.

If you only own a plot of earth

The length of your own shadow then

Your obvious fate is cannon-fodder.

But when a man's as comfortable

As I he runs far greater risks.

You're going to Greece! I'll take you there

For nothing. I'll put you ashore
 Well armed. The more you fan the flames
 Of war the better I shall like it.
 Strike hard for freedom and for right!
 Forward! On! On! Give the heathen Hell!
 And end your days with glory, spiked
 Upon a janissary's spear!
 But make my apologies for me!

(Slaps his pocket.)

Money! Myself! Sir Peter Gynt!

(Opens his parasol and goes into the palm-grove, where the hammocks can be seen.)

TRUMP. The swine!

BALLON. Where is his sense of honour?

COTTON. Honour be hanged! Think of the profits
 We could make if Greece succeeded
 In getting independence.

BALLON. I
 Saw myself crowned a conqueror,
 Fêted by lovely Grecian women.

TRUMP. I saw those celebrated spurs
 Securely held in my Swedish hands.

EBERKOPF. I saw my Fatherland's Kultur
 Creeping out over land and sea.

COTTON. The material loss is greatest.
 Goddam! I could shed tears of rage!
 I saw myself owning Olympus.
 And if that mountain only lives
 Up to its reputation there's
 A mint of copper to be mined.
 And then that river, the Kastale,
 People talk a lot about it,
 But they don't know its waterfalls
 Will generate a thousand horse-power.

TRUMP. I'm going in spite of everything.
 My Swedish sword is worth much more
 Than Yankee gold. . . .

COTTON. Perhaps, but when
 We're in the ranks—and we *will* be—
 We'll be drowned by a mob of others,
 And what will happen to our profits?

BALLON. So near success and now so far!

COTTON (*shaking his fist at the yacht*).
 That nigger-driving Nabob's gold
 Is in that coffin of a ship!

EBERKOPF. A marvellous idea! Quick, quick!
 His empire's going to collapse!
 Hurrah!

BALLON. What is it?

EBERKOPF. Seize the ship.
 We'll bribe the crew. That won't be hard!
 On board! Expropriate the yacht!

COTTON. You can't!

EBERKOPF. We'll pinch the whole damned thing!
 (*He goes to the jolly-boat.*)

COTTON. In that case, my own interests
 Advise me to do some pinching, too.
 (*Follows VON EBERKOPF.*)

TRUMP. That man's a crook!

BALLON. What villainy!
Enfin!

(*They follow the others.*)

TRUMP. All right, I'll go with them,
 But first I make a solemn protest
 Before the court of the whole world.
 (*Follows them.*)

ACT IV.—SCENE 2

SCENE: *Another part of the coast. Moonlight and driving cloud. The yacht is far out to sea, steaming full speed ahead. PEER GYNT is running along the beach. First he pinches his arm, then he gazes out over the sea.*

PEER. Nightmare! Delusions! I'll wake up soon!
 She's putting to sea! And at top speed, too!
 I'm dreaming! I'm sleeping! I'm dotty! I'm drunk!

(Wrings his hands.)

I'm not going to die here! Impossible!

(Tears his hair.)

It's a dream! I've made up my mind it's a dream.
 It's frightening! But, oh dear, it's true!
 Those verminous friends of mine! Hear me, O Lord!
 You're wise. You're righteous! Then judge between us!

(With outstretched arms.)

It is I! Peer Gynt! Pay attention please, Lord!
 Help me, O Father, or I shall expire!
 Make them turn it round! Make them lower the dinghy!
 Stop thief! Make something or other go wrong!
 Hear me! Forget other people *pro tem*!
 The world will take care of itself for a while!
 No, God isn't listening! He's deafer than ever!
 What a state of affairs! A God who can't help!

(Signals heavenwards.)

Hi! I've given up the nigger plantation!
 I've sent out missionaries to Asia!
 Surely, one good turn deserves another!
 Help me get on board—!

(A column of fire shoots into the sky from the yacht and a thick cloud of smoke follows it. PEER GYNT utters a shriek and sinks down in the sand. By degrees the smoke clears away. The yacht has disappeared. PEER GYNT is pale and subdued.)

My God! What a judgment!
 Plop to the bottom, all hands, man and mouse!
 Thanks, eternal thanks, for this lucky escape!

(Emotionally.)

Lucky escape! There's more to it than that!
 That I should be saved and that they should be sunk!
 All praise to the Lord who has sheltered me
 And looked after me despite all my faults.

(Takes a deep breath.)

What a wonderful feeling of safety and peace
 You get when you know that you're specially shielded!
 But I'm out in the desert! Where will I find
 Food and drink? Oh, I'll come across something, no
 doubt.

It will be all right!

(Loudly and ingratiatingly.)

He will never allow
 A poor little sparrow like me to pop off.
 I'll be humble—and then I'll give Him some time.
 I must trust in the Lord. I am full of faith.

(Jumps to his feet in terror.)

Did I hear a lion growl in the shrubs?

(His teeth chattering.)

It couldn't have been. . . .

(Pulling himself together.)

I believe it was!
 They say that carnivora keep clear of men.
 They've learned not to bite their superiors.
 They've an instinct; they feel—what is perfectly true—
 That it's dangerous to play with fire.
 Nevertheless, I must find a tree;
 There are palms and acacias over there.
 If I were up there I'd be safe enough,
 Especially if I knew a few psalms.

(Climbs up.)

"Morning is morning and night is night."
That's a text that is often weighed up and discussed.

(Settles down comfortably.)

How delightful to feel one's spirit exalted!
Noble thoughts are more precious than purple and gold.
Only trust in Him! He alone knows how much
Of the cup of misery I can drink.
He has quite a fatherly feeling for me.

(Glances out across the sea and sighs.)

But no one could say He was frugal about it!

ACT IV.—SCENE 3

SCENE: *Night. A Moroccan camp on the edge of the desert. Warriors resting by the camp-fire. A SLAVE runs in, tearing his hair.*

SLAVE. The Emperor's white steed has disappeared.

(Another SLAVE runs in rending his garments.)

2ND SLAVE. The Emperor's sacred attire has been stolen.

CHIEF EUNUCH *(entering)*.

A hundred strokes of the bastinado

For each man who fails to catch the thief!

(WARRIORS mount their horses and gallop away in all directions.)

ACT IV.—SCENE 4

SCENE: *Dawn. The same group of trees as before. PEER GYNT is still in his tree. He is hitting about him with a branch, keeping a tribe of Barbary apes at bay.*

PEER. Awful! A most uncomfortable night!

(He hits out.)

They're back again! Damn the lot of them!
Now they're throwing fruit. No, it's something else!
A loathsome animal, the ape!
There's a saying: "Keep your eyes open and fight."

But that's just it, I can't. I'm much too tired.

(Is attacked again. He loses his patience.)

I must put an end to this, once and for all.

I'll get hold of one of them and then

I'll hang him and skin him and dress myself

As well as I can in his shaggy coat.

They'll think I'm the genuine article.

What are men? Only feathers blown by the wind.

We have to fit our environment.

More of them! They're everywhere. Cheeky, too!

You devils! Shoo! They're behaving like madmen!

I wish I could tie a tail on myself!

Something to make me look like an ape!

What's that? Something's rustling over my head!

(Looks up.)

It's the old one; his fists are full of mire.

(He crouches down anxiously, remaining quite still. The ape makes a threatening movement. PEER GYNT begins to coax him and talk to him as if he were a dog.)

Aha! There you are! There's a good fellow!

He's a clever boy, isn't he? He knows what's right!

He wouldn't throw dirt! No, I'm sure he wouldn't!

It is I! Cheerio! We're good friends, aren't we?

Bow-wow! Did you hear? I can speak your lingo!

Why, you and I are like cousins, old man.

To-morrow, I'll give you some sugar. The beast!

The whole cartload over me! Horrible!

Perhaps it was food! The taste was unusual;

But taste, after all, is something acquired.

Who was the philosopher who once said,

"Spit and depend on the force of habit"?

Here come the little ones!

(Gesticulates and hits all round him.)

It's too bad

That man, who is really the Lord of Creation,

Should find that he's got to— Help! Murder! Help!

The old man was hellish; the young ones are worse.

ACT IV.—SCENE 5

SCENE: *Early morning. A rocky place with a view over the desert. On one side, a cleft in the rocks and a cave. A THIEF and a RECEIVER of stolen goods are hiding in the cleft with the Emperor's clothes and charger. The horse, very richly caparisoned, is tied to a stone. Riders can be seen in the distance.*

THIEF. The blades of the lances
Are flashing and sparkling.
See, see!

RECEIVER. My head will soon
Roll in the sand.
Woe! Woe!

THIEF (*folding his arms*).
My father stole
So I must steal.

RECEIVER. My father received
So I must receive.

THIEF. You must bear your lot.
You must be yourself.

RECEIVER. Footsteps approaching!
Run! Run! But where?

THIEF. Deep is the grave
And the Prophet great.

(They flee, leaving the booty. The riders disappear in the distance. PEER GYNT comes in cutting a reed pipe.)

PEER. Well, what a perfectly lovely morning!
The dung-beetle is rolling himself in the sand;
The snail is creeping out of his shell.
Morning! Yes, it is far above gold!
Nature has done quite a wonderful thing
In endowing the daylight with such magic powers.
You feel so secure, your courage rises.
You would willingly drag a wild bull by the horns.
What peace there is! Oh, the countryside!

Looking back, I can't believe I abjured it
 To shut myself up in a teeming city
 And be stung by all sorts and conditions of men.
 Just look at those lizards fussing around,
 Or basking and thinking of nothing at all!
 How innocent they are, these animals!
 Each one carries out his Maker's intention,
 Each one wears the permanent stamp of his tribe,
 Each one is himself whether playing or quarrelling,
 Himself as he was on the day of creation.

(Puts on his eyeglasses.)

A toad! Just there, in that clump of sandstone,
 Half-hidden, only his head peeping out.
 There he sits, gazing out on the world,
 As though from a window. To himself
 He is enough. Enough! Be yourself!
 Where have I seen that? In the Bible, I think.
 Or was it the Prayer-Book? Or was it Proverbs?
 It's curious! As the years roll on
 My memory for dates and for places gets worse.

(Sits down in the shade.)

Here's a cool spot. I'll rest here and stretch my legs.
 Look, there are plants here with edible roots.

(Nibbles one.)

It's food for animals; but there's a saying:
 "Overcome your dislikes." There's another one:
 "Pride goeth before a fall." And again:
 "He that shall humble himself shall be
 Exalted." *(Troubled.)* Exalted? Yes, that's what will
 happen

To me. I can see no alternative.
 Fate will take me away from this place
 And see that I get under way again.
 This is my hour of trial. I will be saved,
 If only our Lord will give me the strength.

*(He pushes thought away from him, lights a cigar, stretches
 himself and gazes over the desert.)*

What an immense and limitless waste !
 Away in the distance an ostrich is pacing.
 I wonder what God's intention was
 When He made this enormous desolate space?
 This desert that lacks the essentials of life,
 This perfectly useless dried-up land,
 These arid areas of the earth,
 This corpse, which since the world's beginning,
 Hasn't given its Maker as much as a "Thank you"?
 Why was it made? Nature's unbusinesslike.
 Is that the sea over there in the east?
 It can't be. It must be a mirage.
 The sea's in the west; it's there behind me.
 And that hill is the dyke which is keeping it out.

(A thought strikes him.)

A dyke! Well, perhaps—! It's not much of a hill.
 A dyke! A bit of blasting! Then a canal!
 Like a river of life, it would lead the waters
 Right through the channel, drowning the desert.
 Soon, the whole of this smoking Hell
 Would be as fresh as a rippling sea.
 Island oases would soon appear,
 Atlas would be green like our Northern shores,
 Ships would speed southwards like homing birds
 On routes that were once the caravan tracks;
 Gentle zephyrs would blow and would lower
 The temperature; dew would fall from the skies;
 Cities would spring up all over the place;
 Grass would grow around each swaying palm;
 South of the Sahara, a healthy country
 With spacious harbours would come into being;
 Steam would start Timbuctoo's factories working;
 Bornu would very soon be colonized;
 The explorer would travel by express train
 Via Habes to the Upper Nile.
 On a fertile oasis set in my seas,

I would propagate my Norwegian race.
 The dalesman's blood is almost royal,
 And an Arab cross would do the rest.
 Around a lagoon, on rising land,
 I will found my capital! Peeropolis!
 The world's obsolete! Now it's the turn
 Of Gyntiana, my nascent state!

(Springs up.)

Give me the money! It can be done!
 A key of gold to the door of the ocean!
 A crusade against Death! That greedy old skinflint
 Will have to open his sack of loot.
 Just now, every country is crying for Freedom.
 Like the ass in the Ark I will send my cry
 Right round the world. Freedom's baptism's nigh!
 To those lovely, harnessed, newborn shores
 I must make my way. I'll raise capital
 Everywhere, in the East and the West! On! On!
 My kingdom—no, half my kingdom for a horse!

(The horse whinnies in the ravine.)

A horse! And clothes! And jewels! And a sword!

(Goes nearer.)

It can't be! It is! Yes, really! I've read
 Somewhere or other that faith can move mountains,
 But that doesn't mean it can move a horse, too!
 But a fact's a fact! There is the horse!
Ab esse ad posse and so on, and so on.

(Puts on the robe and looks himself over.)

Sir Peter—and Turk from head to heels!
 Look alive there, Grane, my trusty steed!

(Mounts.)

Gold stirrups, too, to support my feet!
 It goes to show that it's Fate that counts.
 You can tell great folk by the style of their mounts!

(Gallops off into the desert.)

ACT IV.—SCENE 6

SCENE: *The tent of an Arab chief in the middle of an oasis. PEER GYNT, in Eastern dress, is reclining on some cushions. He is drinking coffee and smoking a long pipe. ANITRA and other girls are entertaining him with dancing and singing.*

CHORUS. The prophet has come!
 The prophet, the lord of all the land,
 Unto us the lord has come
 Riding across the sea of sand.
 The prophet, the lord, the all-wise one,
 Unto us the lord has come
 Sailing across the sea of sand.
 Blow the flute, beat the drum;
 The prophet, the prophet has come.

ANITRA. His steed is as white as the milk
 That flows in the rivers of Paradise.
 Bend the knee! Bow low! Bow down!
 His loving eyes are stars that can frown.
 No son of man can face
 The heavenly radiance of those eyes.
 Over the desert he came apace;
 Gold and pearls adorned his breast.
 He rode, and there was light!
 Behind him it was night,
 Behind him was drought and the simoom.
 He, the Magnificent, came.
 Across the desert he came,
 Decked in his earthly guise.
 Kaaba, Kaaba is empty.
 He has spoken, the All-Wise!

CHORUS. Blow the flute, beat the drum;
 The prophet, the prophet has come!

(They dance to soft music.)

PEER. I have seen it in print—so it must be true—
 “No man’s a prophet in his own country.”



I must get away from here. (Page 74)

Tell me, what is the Gyntuan "self"? (Page 83)





Prophetic replies are certainly not lies. (Page 97)

This is a much more pleasant existence
 Than the life over there as a Charleston merchant.
 There was something hollow about all that—
 Something foreign; I might even say corrupt.
 I never really felt quite at home,
 And I never made quite a man of the world.
 What was I doing in such company?
 Rummaging in the cesspool of trade?
 I think about it but light won't dawn.
 It happened—and that's all there was to it!
 To be yourself on the gold standard
 Is exactly like building a house on sand.
 If you flash a ring and a watch and fine clothes,
 Your fellow-men crawl and lick your toes.
 They raise their hats to a diamond-pin;
 But the ring and the pin are not the man.
 A prophet! That makes my position clear.
 At least, I know what my profession is.
 If men praise me now it's because I am I,
 Not because of the size of my bank balance.
 We are what we are! Don't philosophize,
 Don't rely on luck or contingencies,
 Don't depend on patents and permits and grants.
 A prophet! Yes, that suits me down to the ground.
 And I found myself numbered among them by chance,
 Just by going and cantering over the sand
 And running across these children of nature.
 The prophet had come! They asked no more.
 I didn't intend to deceive them. Oh no!
 Prophetic replies are certainly not lies.
 And, anyway, I can always resign.
 I'm not tied. No, things might be much worse.
 It's purely a personal private affair.
 I can go as I came; my charger is ready.
 In short, I am master of the situation.

ANITRA (*approaching*).

Prophet and lord!

PEER.

What does my slave desire?

ANITRA. The sons of the desert are waiting outside.

They beg permission to gaze on your face——

PEER. Stop! Tell them to muster a long way away.

I'll give them audience from afar.

You may add that I'll tolerate no men in here.

Men, my dear child, are a rotten lot,

In fact, they're nothing but dirty swine.

Anitra, if you knew the brazen way

They've cheated, I mean sinned, against me, my child!

Never mind! Enough of them! Dance for me, daughter.

The prophet desires to forget these afflictions.

CHORUS (*dancing*).

The prophet is good; the prophet is sad

At the evil deeds of the sons of man.

The prophet is kind; may his kindness be praised!

To sinners he opens up Paradise!

PEER (*his eyes following ANITRA during the dance*).

Her legs are working as fast as drumsticks.

She's a tasty piece of flesh, the hussy.

Here and there she bulges a bit too much.

Hardly a Northern conception of beauty!

But what is Beauty? Convention! No more!

A coinage that's minted and standardized

In certain places for certain occasions.

The man who's a lifelong teetotaller

Never knows the joys of drunkenness.

Yes, the extravagant makes its appeal

To a tongue overfed with normal fare.

And the normal's never exactly right.

If she's not too fat, she's a bag of bones,

If she's not too young, she's one leg in the grave,

If her age is right, she's an imbecile.

No! The normal is humdrum and tedious.

Her feet—well, they're not conspicuously clean,

Nor her arms—one of them, anyway;

But who cares a jot about things like that?

In fact, I would call them a qualification.

Anitra, listen.

ANITRA (*approaching*). Thy slave has heard.

PEER. You're alluring, my daughter! The prophet is moved.
If you don't believe me, here is the proof—
I'll make you a Houri in Paradise!

ANITRA. Impossible, lord.

PEER. You think I'm lying?
I'm dead serious, as I'm alive!

ANITRA. But I have no soul.

PEER. Then I'll get you one!

ANITRA. But how, my lord?

PEER. You leave that to me!

I'll make it my duty to educate you.

No soul! There's no doubt that you're rather silly;
That's an obvious fact and it's caused me some pain,
But you've ample room for a small-sized soul.

Come here! Let me measure your brain-box, my dear.
There's room! Lots of room! I knew there was!

It's true it will never get you far;

You must face the fact—it will be a small soul,

But dammit, you'll have to be satisfied!

You'll have quite enough to save you from feeling
Ashamed—

ANITRA. The prophet is very kind—

PEER. Why hesitate? Speak!

ANITRA. I would rather have—

PEER. Speak out, my daughter, don't dawdle and stutter.

ANITRA. I'm not bothered so much about getting a soul;
I'd rather you gave me—

PEER. What?

ANITRA (*pointing to his turban*). That lovely opal!

PEER (*giving her the jewel. He is overwhelmed with delight*).

Anitra! You're a true daughter of Eve!

You draw me like a magnet for I'm a man,

And as a well-known writer has said:

"*Das ewig Weibliche zieht uns an!*"

ACT IV.—SCENE 7

SCENE: *Outside ANITRA'S tent. Palm-trees near by. A full moon.*

PEER GYNT, *with an Arabian lute in his hand, is sitting under a tree. His beard and hair have been trimmed; in consequence, he is looking much younger. He is singing and accompanying himself on the lute.*

PEER. I locked the gates of Paradise
And took the key away.
I put to sea while north winds swept
The depths, and lovely women wept
In undisguised dismay.

Through salty seas my frigate sped
Southward to lands remote.
Where palm-trees proud and slender sway
Around a happy sunlit bay,
I stayed and burned my boat.

I boarded then the desert ship,
Four-leggèd, swift and free.
It skimmed along on wingèd feet.
A bird of passage, I! Tweet-tweet!
I twitter on a tree.

Anitra, thou art palm-tree milk
Which I will sample now.
Angora goats-milk cheese is nice
But has not half the bite or spice,
Anitra dear, as thou.

(He hangs his lute over his shoulder and draws nearer.)

Silence! Is my fair one listening?
Did she hear me make sweet moan?
Is she peeping through the curtain,

Veils and suchlike thrown aside?
 Hush! A sound as though a cork
 Had been violently drawn
 From a bottle! There! Again!
 Sighs of love? A serenade?
 No, it was an obvious snore!
 Divine music! Anitra sleeps.
 Nightingale, have done with singing!
 All sorts of plagues will visit you
 If you dare, with chirps and gurgles—
 All right, continue! Destiny
 Made the nightingale a songster
 Even as I am myself.
 He, as I, can win with music
 Tender beating little hearts.
 The cool night was made for song.
 Music is our common sphere,
 The fact of singing makes us us,
 Peer Gynt and the nightingale,
 As the fact that she is sleeping
 Is the crest of my love's bliss. . . .
 As though my lips had touched the beaker
 And left the nectar there untasted. . . .
 Why, there she is! Well, it is best
 That she should appear in person.

ANITRA (*from the tent*). Is my lord calling in the night?

PEER. Yes, your lord is. He's calling still.

I was wakened by the cats

Kicking up an awful row.

ANITRA. Don't think that they were quarrelling.

It was something worse than that.

PEER. What was it then?

ANITRA. Oh, spare me!

PEER. Speak.

ANITRA. Oh, I'm blushing!

PEER (*approaching her*). Perhaps it was

The feeling that suffused me when

I gave you that lovely opal.

ANITRA (*horrified*).

My Treasure, how can you compare
A prophet with a mangy cat?

PEER. Anitra, from a lover's viewpoint
There is nothing to distinguish
A prophet from an old tom-cat.

ANITRA. Jokes, O Master, flow like honey
From your lips.

PEER. Dear little friend—

You, like other maidens, judge
Great men by their exteriors.
At bottom, I am very frisky,
Especially when we're alone.
I am bound, by my position,
To wear a mask of gravity.
The world import of my routine,
The grave decisions, knotty points,
Crowding on me day by day,
Make my manner as a prophet
Rather terse. Yes, I admit it.
But that's the superficial "Me."
When we're alone I'm not like that.
I'm just plain Peer, my own straight self.
Hey presto! Now, the prophet's gone!
I, myself, am here before you!

(*He sits down under a tree and draws her to him.*)

Come, Anitra, we will sport
Beneath this palm-tree's shady branches!
I will whisper, you will simper;
Later on, we'll change our rôles;
Then your rosy lips will whisper
Words of love while I sit simpering.

ANITRA (*lying at his feet*).

Every word is a sweet song,
Though they're past my understanding.
Tell me, prophet, can your daughter
Get a soul by listening?

- PEER. A soul, the light of life and knowledge!
Yes, you will acquire one soon.
When the East, with flaming pencil,
Writes in words of fire, "Day dawneth,"
Then, my child, I'll start your lessons.
We'll make a little lady of you.
But it would be silly if
I tried to act the pedagogue
And forced my threadbare wisdom on you
In the silent hours of night.
The soul should never really be
Our primary consideration.
It's the heart that matters most.
- ANITRA. Speak on, my lord, for when you speak
I see glimpses of more opals!
- PEER. Excess knowledge leads to folly
And the bud of cowardice
Flowers into cruelty.
Truth, when carried to excess,
Is wisdom's pillar upside down.
Yes, my child, people exist
Who are so steeped in their souls
That their vision's out of focus.
If that's not true, my name's not Peer!
I knew a fellow just like that.
He seemed a diamond among paste;
Fine verbiage fell from his lips,
But, in time, he lost himself
In his wood of eloquence.
Take a look at that vast desert
Round about this oasis.
If I cared to swing my turban
I could make the five great oceans
Swallow every nook and cranny.
But why should I start creating
Continents and oceans now?
It's a mug's game, nothing else.
Do you know what life is, child?

ANITRA. No, but teach me, please.

PEER. To float

Dry-shod down the stream of time
Being yourself—that, that is life.
In youth and in manhood alone
Can I be really what I am.
Age makes eagles shed their feathers,
Age gives old men rheumatism,
Age makes old women lose their teeth,
Age gives old misers skinny hands,
And, one and all, their souls dry up.
Youth! As Sultan I must rule,
Fiery with youth, and unimpaired,
Not in the fields of Gyntiana
Underneath palms and spreading vines,
But in the greener, fresher fields
Of a maiden's virgin thoughts.
So you see, my dear Anitra,
Why I've been so gracious with you,
Why I took your tender heart
And established there the Holy
Of Holies of my Caliphate.
I must know your every longing,
Be the despot of your love!
You must be mine alone; you must
Be my prisoner, bound to me
Like jewels to a golden chain.
If we part life will be ended,
Your life, nota bene, please.
Every fibre of your being,
Every cell and every pore,
Must acknowledge my dominion,
Must be conscript to my will.
Your locks, blacker than the midnight,
Your beauty, all that ravishes,
Shall draw me, your Sultan, to
A trysting-place more lovely than
The Hanging Gardens of Babel.

Therefore, it is fortunate
 That you're such a little fool.
 People who possess a soul
 Become consumed by introspection.
 Now, as we are on the subject,
 You shall have this golden bracelet
 To encircle your fine ankle.
 That should satisfy us both;
 No soul but I will now possess you.
 If not—well, the *status quo*.

(ANITRA *snores*.)

She's sleeping! The infectious beauty
 Of my words has glided past her.
 No, it shows my power established.
 She has floated off in dreams
 Upon the stream of my pure song.

(*Rises and puts some jewels in her lap*.)

Here, then, are jewels! And more! And more!
 Sleep on, Anitra! Dream of Peer!
 Sleep! For in sleeping you have crowned
 Your Emperor! To-night, Peer Gynt
 By personality alone,
 Has won his greatest victory.

ACT IV.—SCENE 8

SCENE: *A caravan route. The oasis can be seen in the distance, far behind. PEER GYNT, on his white horse, is galloping over the desert with ANITRA in front of him on the saddle.*

ANITRA. Let me go! I'll bite you!

PEER. You little minx!

ANITRA. What do you want?

PEER. Want? I want to play

At dove and falcon! To carry you off
 And do the maddest, most skittish things.

ANITRA. Shame on you! An old prophet!

PEER. Tommy-rot!

The prophet is not so old, you goose!
Does this bare-back ride point to old age?

ANITRA. Let me go! I want to go home!

PEER. Little rogue!

Home, home! My in-laws! That is an idea!
But birds who have once flown out of a cage
Take very good care not to fly back again.
Besides, my child, you should never remain
Too long in one place, for you lose in respect
What you gain in knowledge of other people,
Especially when you come as a prophet.
You should come and go, like a lovely poem.
It was quite time my visit came to an end.
They're capricious people, these sons of the desert!
Their incense and prayers have both fallen off lately.

ANITRA. But *are* you a prophet?

PEER. I'm your Emperor!

(He tries to kiss her.)

See how perky the little woodpecker is!

ANITRA. Give me that ring you have on your finger.

PEER. Anitra darling, take everything.

ANITRA. Your words are music. How noble they sound!

PEER. What joy to know that you love me so dearly!

Let's away! I'll lead your horse like a slave.

(Gives her the riding-whip and dismounts.)

There, there, my rose, my exquisite flower,
I will trudge beside you in the sand
Till the sun strikes me down and I lie at your feet.
I am young, Anitra, remember that!
You mustn't judge my escapades harshly.
We recognize youth by the pranks he plays.
If only you weren't such a sillybilly,
You'd appreciate, my sweet oleander,
That your lover is full of pranks—*ergo*, he's young!

ANITRA. Yes, you are young. Have you any more rings?

PEER. Of course I'm young. Catch! I can leap like a buck!
If you had any vine-leaves I'd wear a wreath.
Oh yes! I'm young! Look, I'll dance for you.

(*Sings and dances.*)

I am a cockadoodledoo;
Peck me, little pullet.
Oopsie, Twinkleshoe!
I am a cockadoodledoo.

ANITRA. You're sweating, O prophet; I'm afraid you will melt.

Hand over that weighty thing there on your belt.

PEER. Such tender anxiety! Of course you shall hold
My purse. Loving hearts can do without gold.

(*Sings and dances again.*)

Young Peer Gynt is a very crazy chap!
He hardly knows himself from you!
"Pshaw," says Peer. "Pshaw, pshaw! Pooh, pooh."
Young Peer Gynt is a very crazy chap.

ANITRA. What sight is finer than a prophet dancing?

PEER. To Hell with this prophet business! Let's change our
clothes!

Hurry up!

ANITRA. Your burnous would be too long,
Your girdle too ample, your stockings too short.

PEER. *Eh bien!*

(*Kneels down.*)

Then rack me with torment and pangs;
It is sweet for loving hearts to suffer!
When we get home to my castle, Anitra——

ANITRA. Your Paradise! Have we far to go?

PEER. A thousand miles or——

ANITRA. Too far! Too far!

PEER. You shall have the soul I promised you——

ANITRA. No, thanks! I can manage without a soul.
But you were yearning for pangs——

PEER (*getting up*). And torment!

Exquisite, ephemeral—a spasm of pain!

ANITRA. Anitra obeys the prophet! Farewell!

(She raps him over the knuckles with the whip and gallops off at top speed across the desert.)

PEER *(thunderstruck)*. Well, I'm b———!

ACT IV.—SCENE 9

SCENE: *The same. An hour later. PEER GYNT, chastened and thoughtful, is stripping himself of his Oriental robes. Finally, he pulls his little travelling-cap out of his pocket, puts it on his head and stands there attired in European dress once more. He throws his turban as far away as possible.*

PEER. There lies the Turk and here stand I!
 These heathen manners can do us no good.
 It's lucky they're coming off with my clothes,
 And were not tattooed right into my flesh.
 What was I doing in such company?
 I'm a Christian! What could be better than that?
 Away with this peacock ostentation!
 Be lawful, be moral; that's how to live!
 I must be myself and assure myself
 Of a graveside sermon and flowers on my coffin.

(Takes a few steps forward.)

That little minx—I only escaped
 From having my head turned by a hair's-breadth.
 I'd have to be a troll to make out
 What it was that captivated me.
 Thank God it's over! Had that joke gone
 A step further I'd have looked quite silly.
 I have erred—that's so! But it's a relief
 To know that I only erred by proxy.
 It was not I who fell, not I, myself;
 It was the prophet; my life as a prophet
 Was denied the sperm of activity,
 And consoled itself by making a show

Of these sorry, unfortunate acts of bad taste.
 A prophet's life is a difficult one.
 He must stand aloof, must live in the clouds.
 If he shows a gleam of worldliness
 He's put out of business in less than no time.
 I thought I was going along pretty well
 By paying court to that silly goose!
 Still, in spite of everything——

(Bursts out laughing.)

Just think of it!

I tried to bring time to a standstill by dancing,
 By singing and sighing and sloppy canoodling!
 And how did I finish? Like a plucked hen!
 Even a holy man sows his wild oats!
 Yes, plucked! Good God, how I've been plucked!
 It's lucky I've kept a bit in reserve;
 I've a bit in my pocket and a bit more
 In America so I'm not on my beam-ends.
 Middle-class! Yes, that's the thing to be!
 I haven't got a coachman and pair
 And I don't have to bother with trunks or carriage,
 So I'm still master of the situation.
 Many roads are open. Which one shall I choose?
 The wise man can winnow the chaff from the wheat.
 My business life is a finished chapter,
 My love affairs are cast-off clothing,
 And I don't want to double back on my tracks.
 "Backwards or forwards, it's just as far,
 Within or without the path is as narrow."
 That comes from some holy book or other.
 I must think something out, something new and
 ennobling,
 Something that's worthy of labour and cash.
 Should I write my autobiography,
 Unexpurgated, to guide the guileless?
 No, wait! Since I've plenty of time on my hands,
 How would it be if I gave myself

Carte blanche to travel so that I might
 Study Humanity throughout the ages?
 Of course, that's it! It's the very thing.
 In my younger days I used to pore
 Over ancient manuscripts. History
 And Humanity always appealed to me.
 I'll study them. Like a feather I'll float
 Down the unending stream of Time,
 Live over the past, as in a dream,
 See heroes do battle for worthy causes.
 I'll be an onlooker, at a safe distance.
 I'll see thinkers tortured and martyrs bleed,
 See kingdoms crumble and empires fall,
 See great things develop from small beginnings;
 In short, skim the cream of history.
 I must try to get a copy of Becker,
 Go from place to place chronologically.
 I know that my groundwork is not very thorough
 And history is a subtle subject,
 But the crudest experiments have been known
 To yield the most astounding results.
 It's a great thing to set yourself a task,
 Clench your teeth, steel your nerves and achieve your
 aim.

(Moved but restrained.)

To break the bonds that hamper your Self,
 Leave family, home and dearest friends,
 Scatter your wealth and your earthly goods,
 Turn a deaf ear to the wiles of love,
 All in the cause of ultimate truth,

(Wipes a tear from his eye.)

That is the way of the scientist!
 Yes, I've solved the riddle of my life's work,
 And now I'm happy beyond compare.
 I will carry on through thick and thin;
 If I hold my head high, it's forgivable.
 I have found myself—the Man, Peer Gynt,

The Emperor of Humanity!
 The Past will become my hunting-ground;
 Let the modern, the living, pass me by;
 I'll waste no shoe-leather on to-day;
 There's no faith, no spine in modern man,
 His soul has no light, his deeds have no weight.

(Shrugs his shoulders.)

And women—well, frailty, thy name is woman!
(He goes.)

ACT IV.—SCENE 10

SCENE: *A hut in a large forest in Northern Norway. An open door with a large wooden bolt. Reindeer antlers over the door. A flock of goats near the hut. A bright summer's day. SOLVEIG, now a fair, good-looking, middle-aged woman, is sitting in the sunshine, spinning. She gazes down the pathway and sings.*

SOLVEIG. The winter and spring may come and go,
 The summer-time and the long year, too;
 But some day, I know, you'll come back to me,
 And I will wait, as I promised you.
(She calls the goats, then starts spinning and singing again.)
 God give you His love wherever you are,
 If you are on earth or in His care.
 I will wait here till you come back to me,
 And if you're in Heaven I will meet you there.

ACT IV.—SCENE 11

SCENE: *In Egypt. The statue of Memnon in the middle of the desert. Dawn. PEER GYNT walks in and looks around him.*

PEER. I could easily start my travels here.
 For a change I'll become an Egyptian,
 But on the basis of the Gyntian "self";
 Then, I'll wend my way to Assyria;
 But not as far back as the very Beginning;

That would only lead to embarrassment.
 No, I'll go round about Bible history.
 I'm sure to find some traces of it;
 But I won't delve into it very deeply;
 That's not in my power nor is it my plan.

(Sits down on a rock.)

Now, I'll sit here and rest and wait patiently till
 The Statue has sung its morning song.
 After breakfast I'll climb the Pyramid;
 If I've time I'll investigate the inside.
 Then, by land round the north shore of the Red Sea;
 Perhaps I will find King Potiphar's grave.
 Next, to Asia! In Babylon I will seek
 The Hanging Gardens and concubines—
 The earliest signs of civilization.
 Then, on seven-league boots to the walls of Troy,
 And from Troy by the direct sea-route across
 To glorious, ancient Athens. There,
 On the very spot, stone by stone, I'll explore
 The pass that Leonidas defended.
 I will read the higher philosophers,
 Find the prison where Socrates martyred himself.
 But stop! I'm forgetting! There's a war on!
 Hellenism must be laid aside.

(Looks at his watch.)

It's quite absurd—the time the sun
 Takes to rise! I've got no time to waste.
 Oh yes, from Troy—it was there I stopped—

(Gets up and listens.)

What is that peculiar murmuring sound?

(Sunrise.)

MEMNON STATUE *(singing)*.

From the demi-god's ashes new-born there sprang
 Birds that sang.
 Zeus the All-knowing
 Shaped birds of prey.



Antra, you're a true daughter of Eve! (Page 99)



I'm a sheet of paper that's been left blank. (Page 123)

Long live the Emperor, the Emperor of Self! (Page 124)



Owls of Wisdom deep,
Where do my birds sleep?
Then solve the riddle
Of the song—or die!

PEER. I really think a sound came from the statue.
It was music of the Past. I heard
The rise and fall of a voice of stone.
I'll make a note; let the learned ponder.

(Fots it down in his note-book.)

“The statue sang. I heard it distinctly,
But did not quite get the gist of the words.
It must have been a delusion, of course.
Nothing else of importance observed to-day.”

(Goes off.)

ACT IV.—SCENE 12

SCENE: *Near the village of Gizeh. The Great Sphinx, and in the far distance the spires and minarets of Cairo. PEER GYNT enters. He looks carefully at the Sphinx, then puts on his glasses and continues to stare at it, sometimes through his glasses and sometimes through his hollowed hands.*

PEER. Now where have I met this thing before?
This hideous image reminds me of something.
I've certainly met it up north or down south.
Now who was it? Was it a man? If so, who?
It occurs to me now that the Memnon statue
Was like the so-called King of the Dovre;
He sat just like that, just as stiff and straight,
With his bottom firm on a pillar-seat.
But this strange half-breed monstrosity,
This freak, this cross between lion and woman,
Did I meet him on one of my flights of fancy
Or is he an actual memory?
Someone I know? Ha! I remember him now.
It's the Boyg, of course, whose skull I smashed.
At least, I dreamt I smashed it. I was

Delirious at the time with fever.

(*Goes nearer.*)

Same eyes, same mouth, less sluggish, more crafty.
But otherwise very much the same.

Well, there you are, Boyg, you look like a lion
When viewed from behind in the light of day!
Do you still speak in riddles? Let's try you out.
Let's see if you still give the same answers!

(*Shouts to Sphinx.*)

Hi, Boyg, who are you?

VOICE (*behind Sphinx*). *Ach Sfinx, wer bist du?*

PEER. What's that? An echo in German! Unheard of!

VOICE. *Wer bist du?*

PEER. It talks just like a native!

A new observation and all my own.

(*Makes a note in his book.*)

"Echo in German. Berlin accent."

(*BEGRIFFENFELDT emerges from behind Sphinx.*)

BEGRIFFENFELDT. A man!

PEER. I suppose it was he who was speaking.

(*Makes another note.*)

"Later came to other conclusions."

BEGRIFF (*very excited*).

Mein Herr, excuse me—! Eine Lebensfrage—!

Please tell me what brought you here to-day.

PEER. I'm making a call on a boyhood friend.

BEGRIFF. The Sphinx?

PEER. Yes, I knew him well in the past.

BEGRIFF. *Famos!* After such a worried night, too!

My head is just on the point of splitting.

You know him, *mein Herr!* Then tell me, what is he?

PEER. What is he? That's easy! He is himself!

BEGRIFF (*jumping*).

I see it! It's flashed before my eyes

Like lightning! The riddle of life is solved.

One thing is certain! He is himself!

PEER. That's what he says, at any rate.

BEGRIFF. Himself! The Day of Knowledge has dawned.

(Takes off his hat.)

Your name, *mein herr*?

PEER. I was christened Peer Gynt.

BEGRIFF. (*with restrained admiration*).

Peer Gynt! Allegorical! I guessed as much!

Peer Gynt! In other words, the Unknown One!

The Messiah whose coming was revealed to me.

PEER. But—really! Did you come here to meet—?

BEGRIFF. Peer Gynt! Profound, mystifying, intense!

Each word is a mine of unplumbed ideas.

What are you?

PEER (*modestly*). I've always tried to be

Myself. However, here is my passport.

BEGRIFF. Once again that baffling mysterious word!

(Grasps his wrist.)

To Cairo! I've found the Emperor

Of Revelation.

PEER. The Emperor?

BEGRIFF. Come!

PEER. Do they know me here?

BEGRIFF (*dragging PEER with him*). The Emperor

Of Revelation based on Self!

ACT IV.—SCENE 13

SCENE: Cairo. A lunatic asylum. A large courtyard surrounded by high walls and buildings. Barred windows and iron cages. Three KEEPERS in the courtyard; a fourth enters.

4TH KEEPER. Schaffmann, tell me, where's the Director?

A KEEPER. He went out this morning before it was light.

4TH KEEPER. Something must have annoyed him, I think.

Last night—

ANOTHER. Be quiet! There he is at the door!

(BEGRIFFENFELDT comes in with PEER GYNT. He locks the door and puts the key in his pocket.)

PEER (to himself).

Undoubtedly a most talented man;
I can't understand a thing he says.

(Stares round.)

So this is the Scholars' Club, is it?

BEGRIFF. Yes, you'll find them all here, every one of them.
Threescore and ten—the Interpreters' Circle.
One hundred and sixty have been added lately.

(Calls to the KEEPERS.)

Mikkel, Schlingelberg, Schaffmann, Fuchs,
Into the cages with you at once!

KEEPERS. Us?

BEGRIFF. Who else? Come along! Hurry up!
The world's upside down and so are we.

(Pushes the KEEPERS into the cages.)

The great Peer has come to us to-day;
You can draw your own conclusions from that.
I'll say no more.

(Locks the cages and throws the keys in a well.)

PEER. Herr Doktor, Herr Direktor——

BEGRIFF. I'm neither; I used to be but now——
Herr Peer, can you keep a secret? I must
Pour out my heart to someone or other.

PEER (increasingly uncomfortable).
What is it?

BEGRIFF. Promise me you won't faint.

PEER. I will do my best.

BEGRIFF. (draws him into a corner and whispers).

Absolute Reason

Died last night at eleven o'clock.

PEER. Good God!

BEGRIFF. Yes, it's most lamentable,
And in my position, doubly so.
Up till now, this place has been looked upon
As a Lunatic Asylum.

PEER. Asylum?

BEGRIFF. Not now.

PEER (*growing pale and lowering his voice*).

I'm beginning to understand.
The man is mad and no one knows it!

(*Moves away.*)

BEGRIFF. (*following him*).

And now, I hope you see everything clearly.
When I say he's dead I'm talking nonsense.
He's beside himself; he's got out of his skin
Like my countryman Munchausen's fox.

PEER. Excuse me a moment—

BEGRIFF. (*catching hold of him*). He was like an eel,
Not like a fox. A pin through his eye,
And he was wriggling away on the wall—

PEER. What can I do to save myself?

BEGRIFF. A slit round his throat and then whip! He's out
Of his skin!

PEER. Raving mad!

BEGRIFF. It's perfectly clear
That this "exit from self" can only result
In a revolution, world-wide in scope.
Those people who were thought to be mad
Became normal last night at eleven o'clock
In accordance with this new phase of Reason.
What's more, looked at from this new angle,
It becomes apparent that those we thought sane
All went off their heads at that very same hour.

PEER. Talking of time, I'm in a great hurry—

BEGRIFF. Your time? There! You've jolted my memory.

(*Opens a door and shouts.*)

Come out! The hour of re-birth has come!
Reason is dead! Long live Peer Gynt—!

PEER. But, my dear man—

(The lunatics follow each other into the courtyard.)

BEGRIFF. Hail to this festive morn!
Greet the dawn of our deliverance!
Your Emperor has come!

PEER. Emperor?

BEGRIFF. Emperor!

PEER. But the honour's too great; it goes beyond—

BEGRIFF. At a time like this, don't allow yourself
To be ruled by false modesty.

PEER. Give me time!

I'm not fit; I'm completely stupefied.

BEGRIFF. Stupefied? You? A man who has solved
The Sphinx's riddle! A man who's himself!

PEER. That's exactly the point! I am myself
In everything; but here, it appears,
It's a question of being beside yourself.

BEGRIFF. Beside? Oh no! You're sadly mistaken.
Here, we're ourselves from the very word "Go!"
We're ourselves and nothing but ourselves,
We speed full sail ahead as ourselves,
We shut ourselves up in a keg of self,
We stew in our own juice, we seal ourselves up
Hermetically with a bung of self
And get seasoned in a well of self.
We never consider anyone else;
There are no thoughts nor sorrows outside our own;
We are ourselves in thought and in word,
Ourselves to the farthest, the uttermost edge;
And so, since we must have an Emperor,
It's clear that you are the very man.

PEER. If only the Devil—

BEGRIFF. Now, don't get discouraged.
Every new task must have a beginning.
"Oneself." Come here, we'll look for examples;
We'll take a chance and choose one at random.

(To a gloomy person, near by.)

Good day, Hu-hu! Well, my man, are you still
Bowed down by your melancholia?

HUHU. What else can I be when droves
Of people die misunderstood?

(To PEER.)

You're a stranger. Shall I tell you?

PEER (*bowing*). Certainly.

HUHU. Well, listen then.

In the East, like crowns of garlands,
Lie the coasts of Malabar.
Portuguese and Hollanders
Sow the seeds of culture there;
But side by side with them there live
Tribes of native Malabaris
Who have muddled up the language
But who are the overlords.
In ages past, the orang-outang
Ruled the forest undisputed,
Was the lord and master there.
He was free to fight and gibber,
Free to grin and free to gape,
Just as Nature had intended.
He could snarl in perfect freedom;
He was king in his own house;
But—the foreign conquest came,
And the language of the forest
Lost its primeval purity.
A long night of four hundred years
Glowered over the race of apes.
A night like that must kill all progress,
The old primeval forest noises
Are heard no longer. No one growls;
If we want to indicate
Our thoughts we have to do it by
Means of speech. What a restraint!
Portuguese and Hollanders,
Malabaris and Eurasians,

All have suffered equally.
 I have tried to fight the fight
 For our own true forest language,
 Tried to resurrect its corpse,
 Maintained the people's right to gibber,
 Gibbered myself and shown the need
 For gibbering in our folk-songs,
 But my struggles came to nothing.
 Now you know why I am bitter.
 Thanks for listening. If you have
 Suggestions I would like to hear them.

PEER (*to himself*).

They say it's always safe to howl
 With the wolves when they're abroad.
 (*Aloud.*) Dear friend, if my memory serves me,
 There's a tribe of orang-outangs
 In Morocco, which has neither
 Interpreter nor national bard.
 Their language sounds like Malabari.
 Wouldn't it be a fine gesture
 If you, great leader that you are,
 Wandered forth to serve these people?

HUHU. Thanks for listening to my story.
 I will do as you advise. (*With a low bow.*)
 The Orient has spurned its bard;
 The Occident has orang-outangs. (*Goes.*)

BEGRIFF. Well, was he himself? I fancy he was!
 He's full of himself and himself alone.
 He's himself in every idea he expounds,
 Himself because he's beside himself.
 Come here! I'll show you another one
 Whose sanity came back to him last night.

(*To a FELLAH who is carrying a mummy on his back.*)

King Apis, Illustrious One, how are things going?

FELLAH (*wildly to PEER*).

Am I King Apis?

PEER (*getting behind doctor*). I must confess

That I'm not familiar with your case.

But if I can judge from your manner I'd say——

FELLAH. You're lying, as well.

BEGRIFF. Will your Majesty

Report on the situation?

FELLAH. I will.

(*Turning to PEER.*)

Do you see this thing on my back?

He was once a king called Apis ;

To-day he is known as a mummy ;

In addition, he is dead.

He built those pyramids yonder,

And carved the mighty Sphinx,

And fought, as the Doctor tells us,

With Turks on *rechts* and *links*.

And so, the whole of Egypt

Exalted him into a God,

Placed his image in their temples

In the likeness of a bull.

But I am this same King Apis ;

It's as clear as clear to me ;

And if you cannot grasp it,

Understanding will soon dawn.

One day, when King Apis was hunting,

He suddenly got off his horse

And excused himself and went off

Into my grandfather's field.

The earth that King Apis manured

Has nourished me with its corn ;

And if further proof is needed,

Well—I have an invisible horn.

So it's more than hellish, isn't it,

That no one admits my right?

By birth I am King Apis,

But a fella in everyone's sight.

Now give me some sound advice, will you?

This is the question at stake :

How can I become like King Apis
And confound those who think I'm a fake?

PEER. Your Majesty must build pyramids
And carve a more massive Sphinx,
And fight, as the Herr Doctor tells you,
With Turks on *rechts* and *links*.

FELLAH. Well of course, that's marvellous counsel!
A fellah! A starving louse
Who has barely the means to keep
The rats and mice out of his house!
Quick, man! Think of something better,
That will give me what others lack,
That will give me royal features
Like King Apis here on my back.

PEER. Your Majesty, may I suggest that
You hang yourself, and then
In your coffin, in the earth's bosom,
You behave as though you were dead?

FELLAH. I'll do it! My life for a halter!
A rope around my neck!
At first I'll feel a bit different,
But time will soon smooth that out.

(Goes away and begins making arrangements to hang himself.)

BEGRIFF. Herr Peer, I call that personality,
A man with method——

PEER. Undoubtedly—
But he's really hanging himself! Oh, God!
Have mercy! I'm ill! My head's in a whirl!

BEGRIFF. A transitional stage; it won't last long.

PEER. Transition? What to? Forgive me—I'm going——

BEGRIFF *(holding him)*.

Are you mad?

PEER. Not yet. Mad? Heaven forbid!

(Uproar. HUSSEIN, a minister, pushes his way through the crowd.)

HUSSEIN. I've been told that an Emperor arrived to-day.

(To PEER.)

Is it you?

PEER (*in despair*). That seems to have been decided.

HUSSEIN. Then you'll have some documents to sign.

PEER (*tearing his hair*).

All right! Carry on! The madder the better!

HUSSEIN. Will you honour me by taking a dip?

(*He bows low.*)

I am a pen.

PEER (*bowing even lower*). And I am only

A useless piece of imperial parchment.

HUSSEIN. In short, *mein Herr*, my story is this:

They all say I'm a sand-box whereas I'm a pen.

PEER. My history, Herr Pen, is just as brief—

I'm a sheet of paper that's been left blank.

HUSSEIN. No one has an inkling of what I can do.

They only use me for sprinkling sand.

PEER. I belonged to a woman, a silver-clasped book!

Sane or insane—it's a printer's error.

HUSSEIN. Just think how nerve-racking it must be

To be a pen and not feel a knife's-edge.

PEER (*jumping high*).

Just think what it's like to be a reindeer,

To spring from the rocks, to fall, fall, fall

Without feeling the ground beneath your hoofs!

HUSSEIN. A knife! I am blunt! Quick, cut me! Slit me!

The world will end if I'm not sharpened.

PEER. I fear for the world! Like so much else

It was thought by the Lord to be well-nigh perfect.

BEGRIFF. Here's a knife!

HUSSEIN (*seizing it*). Ah! Now I can lick up the ink!

What joy, what ecstasy to slash oneself!

(*Cuts his throat.*)

BEGRIFF (*turning away*).

There's no need to bleed all over me!

PEER (*in growing terror*).

Hold him!

HUSSEIN. Yes, hold me! That's the word!

Hold! Hold the pen! Put pen to paper! (*Falls.*)

I'm finished. The postscript—don't forget it:
He lived and he died, a pen guided by others.

PEER (*wildly*).

What shall I—? What am I? Great God—hold fast!
I'm all that You wish—a Turk, a sinner,
A troll—but help me; something has burst!

(*Screaming.*)

Your name—it's gone—I can't remember—
Help me, Thou! Oh, Protector of Madmen, help!

(*He sinks down exhausted. BEGRIFFENFELDT, with a crown
of straw in his hand, makes a spring and seats himself
astride PEER.*)

BEGRIFF. Ha! Look at him sitting enthroned in the mire!
He's beside himself! We'll crown him there!

(*Places the crown on PEER's head and cries:*)

Long live the Emperor, the Emperor of Self!

SCHAFFMANN (*in cage*).

Es lebe hoch der grosse Peer!

ACT V.—SCENE I

SCENE: *On board a ship in the North Sea, off the Norwegian coast.
Sunset. Stormy weather. PEER GYNT, a hale old man with
grey hair and beard, is on the poop. He is dressed in semi-
nautical fashion with a sailor's jacket and sea-boots. His
clothes are rather threadbare. He is weather-beaten and his
face seems harder. The CAPTAIN and STEERSMAN are at the
wheel. The crew are for'ard. PEER GYNT is resting his
arms on the rails, his eyes fixed on the coastline.*

PEER. Look at the Hallingskarv wearing his winter clothes;
The old man's showing off in the evening sun.
There's his brother, the Jøkel, standing behind,

With his ice-green cape still slung on his back.
 And there, like a virgin in pure white,
 Is the Folgefaann, unblemished still.
 Stay there! Stay for ever! No tricks with me,
 My dear old friends! You are only stone.

CAPTAIN (*shouting for'ard*).

Two men to the wheel—and the lantern set!

PEER. There's a stiff breeze blowing.

CAPTAIN. The storm's on its way.

PEER. Can you see the Ronde hills from the sea?

CAPTAIN. No, they're behind the glaciers.

PEER. Or Blaahø?

CAPTAIN. No, but in the rigging,
 From up aloft when the weather's fine,
 Galdhøpiggen can be clearly seen.

PEER. Where is Haarteigen?

CAPTAIN (*pointing*). Over there.

PEER. Yes, of course.

CAPTAIN. You seem to know these parts.

PEER. I sailed past here when I left my home.
 Someone once said that our minds are like
 Lumber-rooms, full of old memories.

(*He spits and gazes again at the coast.*)

That's where they live, down in the blue dales
 And the black mountain-valleys, like narrow ditches,
 Right on the shores of the open fjords.

(*Looks at the CAPTAIN.*)

The houses are very scattered here.

CAPTAIN. You can walk for miles without seeing a dwelling.

PEER. Will we land by the morning?

CAPTAIN. Just about,

Unless we have a dirty night.

PEER. It looks a bit threatening in the West.

CAPTAIN. Aye!

PEER. When I pay my bill remind me
 To tip the crew. I'd like to give something
 To all of them!

CAPTAIN.

Thank you.

PEER.

It won't be much.

I made my pile but most of it vanished.

Fate and I are at odds just now.

You know how much I've got here on board.

That's all that's left! The rest went west!

CAPTAIN. It's more than enough to give you a standing

With the folk here at home.

PEER.

I've no family.

There's no one expecting this prodigal son.

I'll escape all the scenes at the pier when we land.

CAPTAIN. Look! Here comes the storm!

PEER.

You won't forget?

If anyone here is really in need

I won't look too closely at my money.

CAPTAIN. That's handsome of you. Nearly all are hard up.

And they all have wives and children at home.

They can't make ends meet on their wages alone.

If they can go back with a bit more to spend,

It would be the homecoming of their lives.

PEER. What was that you said? They've got wives and children?

They're married then?

CAPTAIN.

Every man-jack of them!

The cook's the one who's most in need.

His family are all half-starved.

PEER. Married? A home? Someone waiting for them?

Someone to welcome them when they return?

CAPTAIN. Yes, a poor man's welcome.

PEER.

And if they get back

At night, what then?

CAPTAIN.

Then you can be sure

There'll be something special ready for supper.

PEER. A light on the table?

CAPTAIN.

And something to drink.

PEER. And there they'll sit snug with a flickering fire,
With their wives and children around them; such
bustle

And noise—they'll all be talking together,
Too happy to listen to one another!

CAPTAIN. Yes, that will all happen; that's why it was
So good of you to promise to give them
A little bit more to add to their wages.

PEER (*banging the gunwale*).

No, I'm damned if I do! Do you think I'm mad?
Do you really expect me to empty my pockets
For the sake of other people's children?
I've had to slave for what I've got.
There's no one waiting for old Peer Gynt.

CAPTAIN. Do as you like; the money's yours.

PEER. It certainly is! And mine it will stay.
I'll pay my bill the moment we berth!
My fare from Panama; then I'll stand
A round of drinks for the crew—nothing else.
If I give any more, you can punch my nose!

CAPTAIN. I'll put my fist to your bill, not your nose.
Excuse me now; the wind's getting up.

*(He crosses the deck. It has grown dark. A lamp is lit in
the cabin. The pitching and tossing increases. Mist and
heavy skies.)*

PEER. Support other people's swarming brats,
Make them laugh, bring joy into their homes,
Know that they're always in someone's thoughts!
There's no one at all to think of me.
A light to welcome them? I'll put it out!
I'll think of a way! I'll make them all drunk.
Those devils! I'll see that they don't stay sober.
They'll go back to their wives and children dead drunk.
Let them swear, bang the table until it rings,
Let them frighten their families out of their wits,
Let their wives start crying and run from the house
With the children. I'll give them happiness!

*(The ship rolls heavily. He staggers and keeps his feet with
difficulty.)*

Well, that was nasty! The sea is working

As though it were paid for every wave.
 These Northern waters are always themselves,
 Always raging, wayward, tempestuous.

(*Listens.*)

What was that? I heard——

THE WATCH (*for'ard*). A wreck to leeward.

CAPTAIN (*amidships*).

Starboard the helm! Close to the wind!

1ST MATE. Any men on the wreck?

WATCH. I can see three.

PEER. Quick! Lower a boat.

CAPTAIN. It would never get there.

(*Goes forward.*)

PEER. How can you talk like that? If you're men
 You'll try. What does it matter if you
 Get wet?

BO'SUN. It's impossible in this sea.

PEER. They're shouting again. The wind's dying down.
 You, cook! Will you? I'll make it worth while.

COOK. Not for twenty pounds.

PEER. You curs, you cowards!
 They're men, with wives and children at home
 Waiting——

BO'SUN. Well, patience is a virtue.

CAPTAIN. Bear away from the breakers.

1ST MATE. The wreck's gone under.

PEER. This silence—? What?

BO'SUN. If they were married,
 As you seem to think, then three new widows
 Have just been born into the world.

(*The storm increases in fury. PEER GYNT goes aft.*)

PEER. Faith among men is dying out.
 Christianity's only seen in print.
 Good deeds are rare. People never pray.
 They've no respect for the Powers above.
 It's in storms like this that our Lord shows His might.



I'm trying to find the seat of dreams. (Page 131)



Oh, hide me, hide me within your love. (Page 170)

These swine should take care and think of the proverb,
 "It's dangerous to play with fire."
 But no, they persist in flouting Him.
 But *I* am innocent; on the Day,
 I can prove I stood ready, my cash in my hand.
 Will I get a reward? Of course, there's a saying,
 "A good conscience makes a soft pillow."
 That would hold good on shore but not on board ship
 Where a decent man's such a rarity.
 At sea, you can never be yourself,
 You sink or swim with the rest of them.
 If the hour of vengeance strikes for the cook
 Or the bo'sun, it strikes for me as well.
 Personal interests don't count at all.
 You're only a sausage from a machine.
 I've made the mistake of being too meek,
 And it's never got me anywhere.
 If I were younger I'd alter my tactics,
 I'd be much more authoritative.
 There's still time. Very soon it will get around
 That Peer Gynt's back home from his travels abroad.
 I'll get back my farm by fair means or foul.
 I'll rebuild it; I'll make a palace of it;
 But I won't allow anyone inside.
 They'll stand at the door fumbling with their caps,
 They'll beg and they'll pray. I wouldn't mind that.
 But I won't give them anything—not a sou.
 I've had to cower under the blows of Fate.
 I'll make a few others start cowering now.

(*A STRANGE PASSENGER appears in the darkness beside
 PEER GYNT and greets him in a friendly voice.*)

PASSENGER. Good evening!

PEER. Good evening! What? Who are you?

PASSENGER. Your fellow-passenger.

PEER. Well, that's funny!

I thought I was the only one here.

PASSENGER. A small mistake. We've put it right.

PEER. Why is it I've never seen you before?

PASSENGER. I don't go on deck during the day.

PEER. Have you been ill? You're as white as a sheet.

PASSENGER. Not at all. I'm in the best of health.

PEER. What a fearful storm!

PASSENGER. Yes, a good thing, too.

PEER. A good thing?

PASSENGER. The waves are as high as a house.

I'm licking my lips. Just think of all

The ships that are going under! Just think

Of all the corpses that will be washed up!

PEER. Good God!

PASSENGER. Have you ever seen anyone hanged?

Or throttled—or drowned?

PEER. Here! You're going too far!

PASSENGER. The corpses all grin, a mocking grin,

And they've nearly all bitten off their tongues.

PEER. Here! Keep away!

PASSENGER. Let me ask you a question.

Just imagine that we run aground

And sink in the dark—

PEER. You think we're in danger?

PASSENGER. I couldn't say. I really don't know.

But suppose I'm saved and you go to the bottom—

PEER. Nonsense!

PASSENGER. It could easily happen.

When a person has one foot in the grave,

He starts to get generous, gives things away.

PEER (*feeling in his pocket*).

Ah! Money?

PASSENGER. No! But would you care

To give me your highly valuable corpse?

PEER. This is really too much!

PASSENGER. Your corpse, nothing else!

In the interests of science—

PEER. Get away!

PASSENGER. My dear sir, just think what you will gain!

I'll open you up and have you displayed.

I'm trying to find the seat of dreams.

I'd scrutinize every bit of you.

PEER. Get away!

PASSENGER. My dear sir, a useless drowned body!

PEER. You blaspheming fool! You're helping the storm.

Are you mad? Here, in this wind, in this rain,

On this raging sea, with all the signs

That something disastrous may soon occur,

You go and start tempting Providence.

PASSENGER. You're not in the humour for further talk,

But maybe you'll change your mind, in time.

(Nods in a friendly way.)

We'll meet when the ship sinks, if not before!

By then you may be in a better mood.

(Goes into the cabin.)

PEER. They're sinister men, these scientists!

Free-thinkers, as well——

(To the Bo'sUN, who is passing.)

Just a word, my friend!

That passenger? What sort of madman is he?

Bo'SUN. You're the only one I know on board.

PEER. Only me? This is getting worse and worse.

(To a SAILOR who comes out of the cabin.)

Who was that who just went through the cabin door?

SAILOR. The ship's dog, sir.

(Passes on.)

WATCH *(shouting)*. Land just ahead!

PEER. Get my trunk and my box! All my luggage on deck!

Bo'SUN. We've more important things to do.

PEER. I was joking, Captain; it's only my fun!

I'll help the cook! Depend on it!

CAPTAIN. The jib has gone!

1ST MATE. That was the foresail!

Bo'SUN *(shouting from fore'ard)*.

Breakers ahead!

CAPTAIN. She's smashing up!

(The ship founders. Noise and confusion.)

ACT V.—SCENE 2

SCENE: *Close to land, among the rocks and breakers. The ship is sinking. Through the mist glimpses can be seen of a boat with two men. A breaker engulfs it and it overturns. There is a scream. Then silence. A little later the boat's keel emerges. PEER GYNT comes to the surface close to the overturned boat.*

PEER. Help! I'm drowning! Send a lifeboat!
Save me, Lord—that's in the Bible.

(He is clinging to the keel. The COOK breaks surface on the other side of the boat.)

COOK. Dear Lord, take pity on my children.
Be merciful! Help me reach shore.

(He holds on to the upturned boat.)

PEER. Let go!

COOK. Get off!

PEER. I'll hit——

COOK. I'll smash——

PEER. I'll kick you off! I'll do you in!

Let go, can't you? She won't take two.

COOK. I know! Let go!

PEER. Get off!

COOK. Never!

(They fight. The COOK hurts his hand. He hangs on with the other one.)

PEER. Away with that hand!

COOK. Spare me, please.

Think of my little ones at home.

PEER. I need life even more than you.

Up till now I have no children.

COOK. Let go! You've lived. I am still young!

PEER. Get off! Quick! You'll drag us down!

COOK. Have pity! In God's name, give way!

You have no one to grieve for you.

(Screams as he slips off.)

I'm drowning!

PEER (*catching hold of him*). No, I'm holding you
By your hair. Now say your prayers.

COOK. I can't remember. Everything
Is black——

PEER. Then say what's most important.

COOK. "Give us this day——"

PEER. Forget all that.

You'll soon get everything you want.

COOK. "Give us this day——"

PEER. The same old song!

It's obvious you were a cook.

(*His grip on the COOK loosens.*)

COOK (*sinking*).

"Give us this day our——" (*Goes under.*)

PEER. Amen, lad!

You were yourself right to the end.

(*Climbs into the boat.*)

While there's life there's always hope.

(*The STRANGE PASSENGER is seen to be holding on to the boat.*)

PASSENGER. Good morning!

PEER. You?

PASSENGER. I heard you scream.

Amusing to run into you!

Well, was my prophecy correct?

PEER. Let go! There's scarcely room for one.

PASSENGER. Oh, I can swim with my left leg.

I'll float by holding on to this

Chink here with my finger-tip.

But apropos the corpse——

PEER. Shut up!

PASSENGER. The rest is finished off——

PEER. Shut up!

PASSENGER. Very well.

(*Silence.*)

PEER. Well?

PASSENGER. I've shut up.

PEER. You devil, you! What are you up to?

PASSENGER. Waiting.

PEER (*tearing his hair*). I'll go mad. What are you?

PASSENGER (*nodding*).

A friend.

PEER. What else?

PASSENGER. What do you think?

Can't you think of anyone who

Looks like me?

PEER. Only the Devil!

PASSENGER (*softly*).

Does he show us a light when fear

Consumes us and when life is black?

PEER. I see! Then in reality,

You're my guardian angel, are you?

PASSENGER. Friend, have you, say once in six months,

Felt fear strike right into your heart?

PEER. When danger threatens, I'm afraid.

But your talk will get us nowhere.

PASSENGER. Friend, have you, say once in your life,

Won a victory from fear?

PEER (*looking at him*).

If you are here to light my way,

You should have come much earlier.

There's not much sense in coming when

The sea's about to swallow me.

PASSENGER. But would your victory be more sure

In a quiet corner by your fire?

PEER. Who knows? Your talk has led nowhere.

Did you expect to give me faith?

PASSENGER. Where I come from a smile is rated

Higher than affected pathos.

PEER. There is a time for everything.

A proverb says that what is seemly

In a bartender would be

Quite outrageous in a bishop.

PASSENGER. The Great Majority do not

Always strut about in buskins.

PEER. You bugbear, you! Get off! Get off!
I won't die. I shall reach land yet.

PASSENGER. Yes, ease your mind. One doesn't die
Half-way through the final act. (*Glides away.*)

PEER. He blurted it out in the end—
He was a tiresome moralist.

ACT V.—SCENE 3

SCENE: *A churchyard high up in the mountains. A funeral. A
PARSON and congregation. The last verses of a psalm are being
sung. PEER GYNT appears on the road outside the churchyard.
He stops at the gate.*

PEER. Here's another one gone the way of all flesh.
I can thank my stars it isn't me! (*Goes inside.*)

PARSON (*at the graveside*).

Now, as his soul is summoned to his God,
And as his dust lies here, an empty shell,
Now, my dear friends, let us say a few words
About the dead man's pilgrimage on earth.
He was not rich nor was his mind profound;
He was not brave nor was his bearing manly.
In manner he was hesitant and shy.
He scarcely seemed master in his own house.
He crept into this church as though he begged
Our leave to be here and to pray with us.
He came from Gudbrandsdalen; you all know
How he moved here while he was still a boy.
And I am sure that you must all remember
How his right hand was always in his pocket.
Indeed, it was that little mannerism,
Together with his awkwardness and shyness,
His silent, self-effacing reticence,
That stamped his image firmly on our minds.
But though he walked a lonely path among us,
Though he remained a stranger, we all knew—

Despite his vain attempts to hide the fact—
The hand he covered only had four fingers.
I can recall a morning, years ago;
The war was at its height and down at Lunde
Recruiting was in full swing. We knew too well
The dangers that confronted us. The captain
Sat at a table in between the Mayor
And sergeants. I was looking on. Recruits,
In turn, were being measured and examined,
Enrolled, sworn in and taken for the Army.
The room was full of men; outside we heard
A burst of laughter from the volunteers.
A name was called; another lad came in,
As white as snow around the glaciers.
His hand was wrapped in rags. They ordered him
To step up to the table where the captain
Interrogated him; and there the youth
Just stood and gasped, stuttered and swallowed, could
Not find his voice. And then, at last, he spoke.
His cheeks were burning and, from time to time,
His voice would fail him or his words would tumble
Over each other. In this way he mumbled
Something about a sickle that had slipped,
Gone through the bone and cut a finger off.
A silence fell. Quick glances shot across
The room. Lips curled; the silence stoned the boy.
He did not see their scorn and yet it stung him.
And then the captain, a grey-haired old man,
Got up and spat and pointed to the door
And said, "Get out!" The lad went. The crowd
parted,
Making a path through which he had to run
The gauntlet to reach the door. Then he began
To race towards the hills. Up through the woods,
Over the rocks and boulders, stumbling, breathless.
His home was far away among the mountains.
It was six months before he joined us here;
His mother, baby, and betrothed were with him.

He leased some land upon the hillside where
The heath spreads out and reaches up to Lomb.
The moment it was feasible he married,
Built his own house, broke up the stony ground
And worked and worked till patches of golden corn,
Billowing in his fields, told their own tale.
And yet, in church, that hand always remained
Deep in his pocket; but in his own home,
I am quite certain that he did as much
With nine fingers as others do with ten.
One spring, the floods came and his place was wrecked.
They managed to escape but they were left
Ruined and destitute; so, once again
Began the work of clearing and of building.
By autumn, smoke was rising from the chimneys
Of a more sheltered farm upon the mountains.
Did I say sheltered? Well, yes, from the floods,
But not from avalanches. Within two years,
His farm was lying underneath the snows.
And yet, not even avalanches could
Crush the man's courage. He dug, he cleared the snow,
Bore off the rubbish, stored his piles of logs,
And before winter came around again,
He built his humble home for the third time.
He had three sons, three splendid boys they were.
Their school was far away. Where the road stopped,
They had to make their way across the narrow
Tracks and steep ice-fields. So, what did he do?
The eldest had to manage for himself;
But where the path grew difficult the man
Roped the boy to him. The other two he bore,
One in his arms, the second on his back.
And so he toiled, year in year out, till they
Were men. He had good reason now to hope
For some return from his three sons, from three
Rich gentlemen in the New World, but they
Forgot their father living here in Norway,
And the good schooling he had slaved to give them.

He was shortsighted. He could never see
 Beyond the little circle of his home.
 Words that should ring deep down in all men's hearts
 Were distant bells to him; they struck no echo.
 Fatherland, Race—ideals that shine so bright—
 Were lost in mist before his swimming eyes.
 But he was humble; yes, this man was humble.
 And ever since that fateful day at Lunde,
 The badge of shame was worn upon his heart
 As surely as the blush upon his cheeks
 And those four fingers hidden in his pocket.
 A man who broke his Country's laws? No doubt.
 But just as clouds like soaring peaks climb over
 The dazzling tent of Glittertind, so there
 Is something that stands higher than the law.
 He was not a good patriot. To State
 And Church he was a hollow pillar; but
 Out on the barren moors, within his own
 Family circle, where his life's work centred,
 There he was great, because he was himself.
 The substance of the inner man rang true.
 His life was music played on muted strings.
 So, rest in peace, you silent warrior,
 Who fought the peasants' little fight and fell.
 We will not search into his heart and reins;
 That is no task for us but for his God.
 But freely, and in all sincerity,
 I hope that, as he takes his place before
 His God, this man no longer is a cripple.

PEER. Now that's what I call Christianity.
 There was nothing to make you uncomfortable.
 Yes, the subject of the parson's discourse,
 The idea of always being yourself,
 Is, in itself, most edifying.

(Gazes into the grave.)

I wonder if this is the boy I saw
 Slash off his finger that day I was chopping

Trees in the forest? Who knows? If I weren't
Standing here with my stick at the edge of the grave
Of this kindred spirit, I could imagine
That I, myself, was sleeping down there,
Hearing in dreams my own praises sung.
It's a most praiseworthy Christian custom
To review the life of the dear departed
With a charitable retrospective glance.
I, myself, would accept judgment willingly
From a parish priest as right-minded as this one.
Well, I daresay I've got a bit of time left
Before the gravedigger calls me home.
As the Bible says "The best is the best."
And further, "Sufficient for the day
Is the evil thereof." Still further on,
"Don't borrow for your funeral."
Yes, the Church is the only true Consoler;
And I've only just begun to see it.
And now I realize how good it is
To be assured by the well-informed
That "As ye sow so shall ye reap."
You must be yourself. In small things and great,
You must look to yourself. You must take great care
Of everything that belongs to yourself.
And then, if luck is dead against you,
At least the credit of having shaped
Your own divinity will be yours.
Now for home! Let the road be steep and narrow,
Let Fate be unkind to the very end,
Still old Peer Gynt will go his own way
And will be himself, poor but virtuous. (*Goes.*)

ACT V.—SCENE 4

SCENE: *A hill with a dry river-bed. A ruined mill on the bank of the river. The ground is broken up; there is desolation everywhere. Higher up is a big farm and outside it an auction is taking place. A large noisy crowd has gathered; a good deal of drinking is going on. PEER GYNT is sitting on a rubbish-heap near the mill.*

PEER. Backwards or forwards it's just as far,
 Within or without the path is as narrow.
 Time and tide wait for no man. "Go round about,"
 Said the Boyg, and it's what I must do here.

MAN IN MOURNING. Now there's only the rubbish left.

(*Sees PEER GYNT.*)

We have strangers, too! God bless you, my friend!

PEER. Good day! This is quite a festive occasion.
 Is it a christening or a wedding?

MAN IN M. Call it rather a home-coming party.
 The bride is asleep on a bed of worms.

PEER. And worms are fighting for bits and pieces.

MAN IN M. It is the end, the end of life's story.

PEER. Every story is old, every story has
 The same ending. I knew them when I was a boy.

YOUTH (*with a casting-ladle*).

Look at this! I've just bought it! Isn't it splendid?
 Peer Gynt used to cast silver buttons in this.

2ND YOUTH. What about me? A purse for a ha'penny!

3RD YOUTH. And me? A pedlar's pack for twopence.

PEER. Peer Gynt? Who was he?

MAN IN M. I only know
 That he was brother-in-law to Death
 And to Aslak, the smith.

MAN IN GREY. You're forgetting me.
 Are you drunk or mad?

MAN IN M. You're forgetting the loft
 At Heggstad.

MAN IN GREY. That's true! But when were you squeamish?

MAN IN M. Supposing she plays fast and loose with Death!

MAN IN GREY. Come along, have a drink with your brother-in-law.

MAN IN M. Brother-in-law! Go to Hell! You're raving!

MAN IN GREY. Oh, nonsense! Blood isn't as watery as that!
We're both related somehow to Peer Gynt.

(They go off together.)

PEER *(softly)*.

I am meeting old friends and no mistake.

(A BOY calls after the MAN IN MOURNING.)

BOY. Poor mother will haunt you, Aslak, if you
Start drinking again.

PEER *(getting up)*. The farmer's saying,
"The deeper you dig the better it smells,"
Doesn't hold.

YOUTH *(with bearskin)*. Look here! It's the Dovre-cat!
Or anyway, it's his skin. It's the one
Who went chasing the troll on Christmas Eve.

2ND YOUTH *(with reindeer horns)*.

Here's the reindeer's horns on which Peer Gynt
Went over the top of the Gendin Ridge.

(3RD YOUTH, holding a hammer, calls across to the MAN IN MOURNING.)

3RD YOUTH. Hi, you, Aslak, look at this hammer!
Was it the one you used when the Devil
Broke through the wall?

4TH YOUTH *(empty-handed)*. Mads Moen, here it is!
The invisible cloak in which Peer Gynt
And Ingrid flew off and disappeared!

PEER. Some brandy here, boys! I'm feeling my age!
I'll put all my rubbish up to auction.

YOUTH. What have you got?

PEER. I've got a Palace
With big, thick walls. It's in the Ronde.

YOUTH. I bid one button.

PEER. Make it one tot.
It's a sin and a shame to bid less than that.
ANOTHER YOUTH. He's a funny old fellow!

(*The people surge round him.*)

PEER. Grane, my horse!
Any bids?

ONE OF CROWD. Where is he?

PEER. Out in the west!
Near the setting sun, boys! Grane can run
As fast, yes as fast, as Peer Gynt could tell lies.

VOICES. What else have you got?

PEER. I've got gold and dross.
I bought them, soiled. I'll sell at a loss.

YOUTH. Put them up!

PEER. I've a dream about a prayer-book!
You can have it for a hook and eye.

YOUTH. To the Devil with dreams!

PEER. Then there's my Empire!
I'll toss it to you; you can scramble for it.

YOUTH. Is the crown thrown in?

PEER. A crown of straw!
It will fit the first man who tries it on.
Hi, there's still more! An addled egg!
A madman's grey hair! The prophet's beard!
I'll give the lot to the person who
Can show me the signpost out on the moor,
The signpost which says "This is the way."

(*A REPRESENTATIVE OF THE LAW arrives.*)

REP. OF LAW. I don't like your behaviour, my man.
Your signpost will take you straight to gaol.

PEER (*hat in hand*).
That may be, but tell me, who was Peer Gynt?

REP. OF LAW. What—!

PEER. If you don't mind, I'd like to find out.

REP. OF LAW. Well, they say he was a silly romancer.

PEER. Romancer?*

- REP. OF LAW. Yes, he wove together
 All the famous exploits he'd read about,
 Then claimed them as his very own.
 But excuse me, my friend, I've no time to waste. (*Goes.*)
- PEER. And where is he now, this remarkable fellow?
- ELDERLY MAN. He emigrated—some foreign land—
 Went from bad to worse, as you might have guessed,
 And got himself hanged. It was years ago.
- PEER. Hanged? Fancy that! I'm not really surprised.
 The late Peer Gynt was himself to the end.

(*Bows.*)

Good-bye—and thank you all for your kindness.

(*Begins to go, then stops.*)

All you happy men, all you pretty girls,
 Would you like to hear one of my yarns?

VOICES. What sort of yarns?

PEER. Oh, quite simple ones.

(*He draws nearer. A strange look comes over his face.*)

I used to dig gold in San Francisco.
 The whole town was crammed with conjurers.
 One played the fiddle with his toes,
 Another could tango on his knees,
 A third, I was told, kept on making rhymes
 While his skull was being bored through and through.
 One day, the Devil turned up at the Fair;
 He wanted to try his luck as well.
 He had the knack of being able
 To grunt like a pig; it was true to life.
 Although nobody recognized him,
 His personality drew the crowds.
 The house was full and expectations
 Rose to fever-heat. Then he went on,
 Wearing a long and flowing cape—
 “*Man muss sich drapieren,*” as the Germans say.
 But under the cape—and no one knew it—
 He'd managed to stow away a pig.

The show began. The Devil pinched
 The pig, which squealed. The whole show was meant
 To be a phantasy on the life
 Of a pig from the sucking stage to the final
 Squeal at the thrust of the slaughterer's knife.
 At the finish, the artist bowed low and went off.
 Critics discussed the actor's performance.
 Opinions varied. Some praised, some condemned.
 Some thought the tone of the squeals too thin;
 Others considered the death-shriek too studied.
 But on one thing everyone agreed—
 That the act *qua* grunt was overdone
 Ridiculously. That's what Satan got
 For his crass stupidity in failing
 To take the measure of his public.

(He bows and goes. An uneasy silence falls on the crowd.)

ACT V.—SCENE 5

SCENE: *Whitsun eve. In the depths of the forest. Further away, in a clearing, is a hut with reindeer antlers over the door. PEER GYNT is on his hands and knees in the undergrowth gathering wild onions.*

PEER. This is one point of view. Where is the next one?
 You must try everything, then choose the best.
 Well, I've done that. I was Cæsar once.
 And now I'm another Nebuchadnezzar.
 I'm going right through Bible history.
 This old boy's gone back to his Mother again.
 Of course, the Bible says, "Dust thou art!"
 The main thing in life is to fill your belly.
 Fill it with onions? No, that won't do.
 I will be cunning. I'll set some snares.
 There's a stream near by so I'll never be thirsty.
 I'll still be a lord of creation here.
 And when I die—as I dare say I will—

I'll creep under a tree blown down by the wind ;
 I'll cover myself with leaves, like a bear,
 And on the bark I'll scratch in big letters,
 "Here lies Peer Gynt, quite a decent fellow,
 Emperor over all the beasts."
 Emperor? (*Laughs to himself.*)

You silly old buffoon!

You're no Emperor; you are just an onion.
 And I'm going to peel you, my dear Peer!
 Neither tears nor prayers will help you now.

(*Takes an onion and peels it layer by layer.*)

There's the outer layer, all bruised and broken ;
 It's the drowning man hanging on to the wreck.
 This is the wisp of a passenger ;
 He seems to taste a bit like Peer Gynt.
 And inside here is the gold-digging "I."
 The juice has gone—if it ever had any.
 This layer here with the hard coarse skin
 Is the fur-trapper of Hudson's Bay.
 The next layer's like a crown. Thank you!
 We'll throw it away without more ado.
 Here's the archæologist, short but powerful,
 And here is the prophet, juicy and fresh ;
 He stinks, as the proverb says, of lies,
 Enough to bring tears to an honest man's eyes.
 This layer, so soft and immaculate,
 Is the man who lived for gaiety.
 The next one looks poorly; it's shot through with black.
 It brings negroes and missionaries to mind.

(*Picks several at a time.*)

There's quite a multitude of layers.
 When am I going to get to the heart?

(*Pulls the whole onion to pieces.*)

God, it hasn't got one! Right to the middle,
 It's layers and layers, each getting smaller.

Nature is witty!

(Throws the bits away.)

To Hell with thought!

Once you start thinking, you start stumbling, too.
As a matter of fact, I can smile at that danger;
I seem to be firmly set on all fours.

(Scratches the back of his neck.)

Life itself is really a funny affair.
People say it pulls the wool over your eyes,
You make a grab for it—and it's gone,
And you get the wrong thing—or nothing at all.
(He has approached close to the hut. He sees it and starts.)

That hut? In the forest! But—

(Rubs his eyes.)

I could swear—!

I know I've seen this building before.
Those reindeer antlers over the door!
That mermaid with the long swishing tail—
Lies! It's no mermaid but nails and boards,
And a bolt to keep out hobgoblin thoughts!

(SOLVEIG'S voice is heard in the hut.)

SOLVEIG. Now all is ready for Pentecost,
Dear love of mine so far away,
When will you come back?
Your burden is heavy?
Then rest, rest awhile;
I will wait, I promised
You long, long ago. . . .

(PEER GYNT rises, white as death.)

PEER. One who remembered, and one who forgot,
One who had faith, and one who had none.
The game is over; my race is run!
What a trickster is Fate! My Empire was here.

ACT V.—SCENE 6

SCENE: *Night. A moor with pine-trees. The place has been ravaged by a forest fire; charred tree-trunks can be seen for miles around. Patches of mist here and there on the ground. PEER GYNT runs in across the moor.*

PEER. Ashes, mists and driving dust-storms—
 They're the stuff from which to build!
 Stench and rottenness inside them;
 All a whited sepulchre.
 Dreams, romance, and still-born wisdom
 For foundations, and above
 The pyramid will rise complete
 With its steps and stairs of lies.
 "Flight from truth and from repentance."
 Let it fly out like a banner,
 Let the horn of doom ring out with
 "*Petrus Gynthus Cæsar fecit.*"

(*Listens.*)

I hear the sound of children weeping,
 Weeping that is half a song.
 Threadballs are rolling at my feet!

(*Kicking them.*)

Get away! You block the path!

THREADBALLS (*on the ground*).

We are thoughts;
 You should have thought us!
 Legs to move on,
 You should have brought us!

PEER. Once, I gave life to a thought;
 It was deformed, with crooked legs.

THREADBALLS.

We should have soared skyward,
 A tremulous choir.

Instead, as grey threadballs,
We roll in the mire.

PEER (*stumbling*).

Threadballs, you confounded devils!
Are you tripping up your father?

(*Runs away.*)

WITHERED LEAVES (*flying before the wind*).

We are passwords;
You should have known us!
See where your indolence
Has torn and blown us.
The worm has gnawed us
In every vein;
We have never warmed
The fruit within.

PEER. Despite that, you weren't born in vain;
Lie still; you'll make a good manure.

A SIGHING IN THE AIR:

We are songs
You have left unsung!
In the depths of your heart
To hope we clung.
A thousand times over
We were stifled and killed;
We were never called;
May your voice be stilled!

PEER. Be stilled yourself, with your rhyme and curse!
What time have I for nonsense verse?

(*Turns aside.*)

DEWDROPS (*dripping from the trees*).

We are tears
That would never fall!
We could have melted
The ice-spears of gall.
Now the barb remains
In the stubborn breast;
The wound is closed;
Our power has passed.

PEER. Thanks—I wept in Rondesvalen,
And got a kick in the behind!

BROKEN STRAWS.

We are deeds
You have left undone!
Doubt, the Destroyer,
Assailed us and won.
On the Day of Judgment
We shall be there
To tell our story
And then, beware!

PEER. You rascals! Would you dare to censure
Me for what I haven't done?

(Runs away.)

AASE'S VOICE (*far away*).

Pshaw! What a driver!
You've thrown me in
To an icy puddle;
I'm soaked to the skin!
You're on the wrong road, Peer;
Where is the Castle?
The Devil's misled you
With that whip you've got there.

PEER. I think I'd better hurry off.
I'd sink into the hillside if
I had to bear the Devil's sins.
My own are hard enough to carry.

(Runs away.)

ACT V.—SCENE 7

SCENE: *Part of the moor.*

PEER (*singing*).

A sexton, a sexton! Where are you, you hounds?
Bleating notes from the preceptors' mouths.
Around your hats, black mourning-bands!
Let me follow the coffins of my dear friends!

(The BUTTON-MOULDER, with his box of tools and a large casting-ladle, enters from the side-path.)

BUTTON-MOULDER.

Good evening, old man!

PEER.

Good evening, my friend!

BUTTON-MOULDER.

You're in a great hurry. Where are you off to?

PEER. A funeral.

BUTTON-MOULDER. Oh? My sight's not so good—

Excuse me—your name isn't Peer, I suppose?

PEER. Yes, it is—Peer Gynt.

BUTTON-MOULDER.

Well, I call that luck!

I've been searching for Peer Gynt everywhere.

PEER. Oh? What do you want?

BUTTON-MOULDER.

You can see what I am.

I'm a button-moulder. I want you for my spoon.

PEER. What for?

BUTTON-MOULDER. You are to be melted down.

PEER. Melted?

BUTTON-MOULDER.

Yes, look! It's been cleaned and it's empty.

Your grave is dug, your coffin is ready.

The worms will have a high time with your carcass.

I have orders here from my Employer

To bring Him your soul without any delay.

PEER. You can't do that! I've had no warning.

BUTTON-MOULDER.

It's the custom at funerals and births

To give the guest a tremendous surprise.

No one ever tells him the fateful day.

PEER. Yes, I know. My brain is in a whirl.

You are—?

BUTTON-MOULDER. I told you! A button-moulder.

PEER. I see! But a pet child has lots of nicknames.

So it's come to this, Peer, you end up in that spoon!

But, my good man, surely there's some mistake.

I'm worthy of better treatment than this;

I'm not as bad as you seem to think;
 I've done my share of good deeds on earth;
 At the worst, I'm no more than a bungling ass;
 I'm certainly not a confirmed reprobate.

BUTTON-MOULDER.

You're getting away from the point, my dear man.
 Because your sins were such puny ones
 You're being let off perpetual torment
 And are ending, like most, in the casting-ladle.

PEER. Call it what you like—ladle or sulphur-pool,
 Light ale or dark ale—they're both of them ale,
 Get behind me, Satan.

BUTTON-MOULDER. You can't be so rude
 As to think my foot is a horse's hoof?

PEER. A horse's hoof or a fox's claw!
 Off you go! And stick to your own affairs!

BUTTON-MOULDER.

My friend, you're making a great mistake.
 As we're both in a hurry I'll put the case
 As concisely as possible. It will save time.
 You are not, as you yourself have confessed,
 A sinner in a magnificent way.
 You're about mediocre——

PEER. Well, you're beginning
 To talk sense at last.

BUTTON-MOULDER. Now wait a minute!
 I'd be going too far if I called you righteous.

PEER. That's something I would never expect.

BUTTON-MOULDER. You've steered the usual middle course.
 A sinner in the really grand manner
 Is hardly ever met nowadays.

There's more to it than wallowing in filth.
 Strength and purpose are needed for epic sinning.

PEER. What you've said just now is true enough;
 You must rush at it like the berserkers.

BUTTON-MOULDER.

You didn't do that; you took sin lightly.

PEER. Superficially, like a splash of mud.

BUTTON-MOULDER.

Now we're reaching agreement. The sulphur-pool
Is not for those who have splashed in the mud—

PEER. And therefore, my friend, I can go as I came?

BUTTON-MOULDER.

And therefore, my friend, you'll be melted down.

PEER. What sort of dodges have you been up to
Here at home while I've been abroad?

BUTTON-MOULDER.

The method's as old as the world's creation.

Its aim is the conservation of matter.

You know the trade, so you're well aware
That a casting may frequently have a flaw.
For example, a button may have no loop.

What would you have done with it?

PEER. Thrown it away.

BUTTON-MOULDER.

Oh yes! John Gynt was a squanderer
As long as he had something left in his pocket.
But my Employer is very careful;
That's why he's become so prosperous.
He throws nothing away; he finds a use
For the useless as raw material.
You were going to be a shining button
On the world's waistcoat; but your loop gave way.
So you must be merged into the mass.

PEER. You don't mean that you're going to melt me
down

With any old Tom, Dick and Harry into
Something new?

BUTTON-MOULDER. That's exactly what I do mean.

We've done that with others, time and again.

They do the same thing at the Mint with coins
Which have worn thin with being handled too much.

PEER. It's nothing but out-and-out stinginess!
My dear old friend, won't you let me off?

A button with no loop! A shilling worn smooth!
What are they to a man of your Master's standing?

BUTTON-MOULDER.

Oh, you have a soul and that's sufficient
To give you some value as metal-scrap.

PEER. No, I say, no; I'll fight to the end.

I protest! I'd do anything rather than that.

BUTTON-MOULDER.

But what else is there? Come, be sensible.
You'd never feel at home in Heaven.

PEER. I'm easy to please. I don't aim so high.

But I won't give up a jot of myself.

Judge me in the good old-fashioned way,
Send me to Him with the hoof for a time,
A hundred years if you think I deserve it;
I fancy I'd manage to last it out.

After all, it would only be moral torture,
So it wouldn't be really unbearable.

It's a transition stage, as the proverb has it;
Or as the fox said, "You wait and the hour
Of deliverance comes, and you double back
And hope that better days will come."

But this other thing—to have to be merged
Into some other body, a particle,
This ladle-business, this ending of Gynt—
My innermost soul rebels at it.

BUTTON-MOULDER.

But, my dear Peer, it's really unnecessary
To take on so much about such a small thing.
You have never really been yourself,
So why bother now if you go for good?

PEER. I've not been myself! I could almost laugh!

Peer Gynt not himself! Well, well, we shall
see!

No, Button-moulder, your judgment is blind;
If you could see right into my mind,
Then and only then you would meet me, Peer,
And nothing but Peer and nothing else.

BUTTON-MOULDER.

That's quite impossible. Here are my orders.

They're in black and white: "You will bring Peer Gynt.

He has defied his life's destiny.

To the ladle with him as damaged goods!"

PEER. What nonsense! They must mean somebody else.
Does it really say "Peer"? Not Rasmus nor John?

BUTTON-MOULDER.

I melted them down a long time ago.

Now come with a good grace and don't waste time.

PEER. I'm damned if I will! A very nice thing
If you found out later you'd made a mistake!
You'd better take care, my man. Just think
Of the onus attached.

BUTTON-MOULDER. It's in writing here.

PEER. Give me time.

BUTTON-MOULDER. Why should I?

PEER. I'll go and get proof.

That I've been myself as long as I've lived.

That's the crux of our argument, isn't it?

BUTTON-MOULDER. Proof? How?

PEER. Witnesses? Certificates!

BUTTON-MOULDER.

I'm afraid my Employer won't be impressed.

PEER. I'm sure he would. However, "Sufficient
For the day is the evil thereof." My friend,
Only let me loan myself out on trust.
I'll soon be back. We're only born once,
So we do our best to cling to the self
That was born with us. Well? Do you agree?

BUTTON-MOULDER. Very well then, we'll let it go at that.
But remember, we'll meet at the next crossroads.

(PEER GYNT runs away.)

ACT V.—SCENE 8

SCENE: *Another part of the moors.* PEER GYNT *runs in.*

PEER. Time is money; the good book says so.
 If only I knew where the crossroads are!
 They may be near and they may be far.
 The earth is burning like red-hot iron.
 A witness! A witness! Where's a witness?
 I won't find one here in the depths of the forest.
 A world where a man has to prove his rights
 Which are clear as daylight, must be in a mess.
 It's badly managed!

(A bent old man with a staff in his hand and a bag on his back is trundling along in front of PEER. He is the KING OF THE DOVRE MOUNTAINS.)

KING *(stopping)*. Please, sir, a coin
 For a homeless beggar.

PEER. I've no small change.

KING. Prince Peer! Just fancy us meeting again!

PEER. Who are you?

KING. You remember the Dovre King?

PEER. You're never——

KING. The King of the Ronde mountains!

PEER. The Dovre King? Really? The Troll King? Tell me!

KING. Yes, but I'm not what I used to be.

PEER. Ruined?

KING. And robbed; stripped of everything;
 I'm a tramp now, as hungry as a wolf!

PEER. Hurrah! You're the witness I'm looking for!

KING. Prince Peer, you've aged a bit since our meeting.

PEER. Dear father-in-law, the years gobble us up.
 Well, an armistice to our private affairs,
 And above all to our family quarrels.
 When we met before I was just a raw youth.

KING. Prince Peer, you were young and youth will be served.
And you did the right thing when you threw your bride
over.

You've saved yourself lots of shame and distress.
Later on, she went to the bad completely.

PEER. Really?

KING. She's just an abandoned woman.
Only think—she's living with that dirty Trond.

PEER. Which Trond?

KING. Of Valfjeld.

PEER. That one? Aha!

I took his three cowherd-girls from him.

KING. But my grandson has grown fat and prosperous;
He has bouncing babies all over the land.

PEER. My dear man, please spare me these intimate details;
Something else is preying on my mind.

I happen to be in serious trouble—

I want a good-conduct certificate.

Now, you can help me, dear father-in-law;

In return, I daresay I could stand you a drink.

KING. Can I really help you in any way, Prince?

Will you give me a character in return?

PEER. Certainly. At present I'm rather hard up.

I have to stint and save what I can.

Now listen, I'll tell you what it's about.

You remember the day I arrived in the Ronde

And asked you for your daughter's hand?

KING. Of course I do, Prince!

PEER. Drop this "Prince" business.

You wanted to lay rough hands on me,

Slit the lens of my eye, make me see awry

And transform Peer Gynt into a troll.

What did I do then? I rose up and fought you;

I swore that I'd stand on my own firm feet;

I rejected love and power and a kingdom,

Gave up everything just to be myself.

And that's what I'd like you to swear to when—

KING. No, I can't.

- PEER. What are you talking about?
- KING. You wouldn't want me to tell lies, would you?
Don't you remember wearing a tail,
Drinking our mead?
- PEER. Yes, you coaxed me to do it;
But I lasted out and I won in the end.
A man is judged by such deeds as that.
The last verse is always the one that counts.
- KING. But, Peer, the result was just the reverse.
- PEER. What do you mean?
- KING. When you left my palace,
You'd written my motto on your coat-of-arms.
- PEER. What motto?
- KING. That all-embracing word——
- PEER. What word?
- KING. The word that distinguishes
Human beings from trolls, "Troll, to thyself
Be—enough."
- PEER (*stepping back*). Enough!
- KING. And that's how you've lived
With every fibre of your being.
- PEER. What? I? Peer Gynt?
- KING (*weeping*). You're very ungrateful.
You've lived like a troll but you've kept it dark.
The word I taught you established you
As a man of the world; it gave you fame.
And now you come here and start to sneer
At me and the word that gave you so much.
- PEER. Enough! A troll! Just an egoist!
It's a lot of rubbish! I'm certain it is!

(*The old man pulls out a bundle of newspapers.*)

- KING. I expect you think we have no papers.
Look! In black and white! For all eyes to see!
How the *Bloksberg Post* has been patting your back
And the *Heklefjeld Express* as well,
Ever since that winter you went away.

Would you like to read them, Peer? Here, take a look!
 Here's a leader signed by "Stallion's Hoof."
 Here's another on "Troll Nationalism."
 The writer shows that you don't have to wear
 A horn or a tail to be a troll.
 The feeling! The outlook! That's what matters!
 "Our 'Enough,'" he ends, "gives the character
 Of Trolldom to Man"; and then he cites
 The case of Peer Gynt as the best example.

PEER. A troll? I!

KING. Yes, that seems perfectly clear.

PEER. I might just as well have stayed where I was,
 And lived in the Ronde in comfort and peace,
 And saved myself shoe-leather, toil and trouble!
 Peer Gynt—a troll! It's nonsense! It's lies!
 Good-bye! Here's a penny to buy tobacco!

KING. Dear Prince Peer—

PEER. Stop all that! You're mad or else
 You're doting. Go off to a hospital.

KING. That's the very thing I'm looking for.
 But, as I've told you, my grandson's offspring
 Are very powerful in the country;
 They're spreading the news that I'm only a myth.
 People say you should never trust relatives;
 To my sorrow, I've learned how true it is.
 It's hard to think I'm only a myth.

PEER. My dear man, it's happened to others as well.

KING. And we trolls can't depend on a Pensions Fund,
 Nor Post Office Books, nor alms-boxes.
 They would be incongruous in the Ronde.

PEER. No, the only things that mattered up there
 Were those cursed words, "To thyself be—enough."

KING. Prince Peer, you should be the last to complain.
 And if, in some way or other, you could—

PEER. My man, I'm afraid you're on the wrong scent.
 The wolf's at my door; you know what that means.

KING. You don't say so! You? A beggar, too?

PEER. Stony-broke! My princely "self" is in pawn;

And who have I got to thank for that?

You trolls! Now, you see what low company does!

KING. So my hope's gone west! Good-bye! I must
Make my way into town somehow or other.

PEER. What will you do there?

KING. I'll go on the stage.
They're on the look out for native talent.

PEER. The best of luck! Give them greetings from me.
If I can get free I'll do the same thing.
I'm going to write a comedy,
Profound and witty in turns. It will
Be called, "*Sic transit gloria mundi.*"

(*Goes off along the path leaving the old man shouting after him.*)

ACT V.—SCENE 9

SCENE: *Crossroads.*

PEER. You're in for a nasty time, friend Peer;
The trolls' "Enough" has let you down.
Your ship has sunk; you must cling to a spar,
To anything, rather than go to the scrap-heap.

BUTTON-MOULDER (*at the crossroads*).

Well, Peer Gynt, where's your certificate?

PEER. What? Crossroads again? That was pretty quick.

BUTTON-MOULDER. I can read your face like an open book.

I don't need the papers to tell me the news.

PEER. I'm worn out with looking; you soon get lost.

BUTTON-MOULDER.

And besides, where is your road leading you?

PEER. Yes, where? In the forest at nightfall, too——

BUTTON-MOULDER.

There's an old tramp there; shall we call him over?

PEER. No, let him go! He's drunk, anyway!

BUTTON-MOULDER. But he might be able——

PEER. No, let him go!

BUTTON-MOULDER. Well then, let's begin.

PEER. A question first:

What do you mean by "being yourself"?

BUTTON-MOULDER.

That's an astounding question from you.

Why, a moment ago——

PEER. Come, come, answer me.

BUTTON-MOULDER. To be yourself is to kill the worst

And so to bring out the best in yourself.

But I'm certain that would be lost on you,

So let's put it more simply: To carry out

The Master's intention in every detail.

PEER. How about the man who has never learned

What the Master intended to do with him?

BUTTON-MOULDER. His intuition should tell him that.

PEER. Intuitions are frequently wide of the mark.

They may send you "*ad undas*" and kill your career.

BUTTON-MOULDER.

That's true, but when you lack intuition

You give the Devil his opening.

PEER. This is a very knotty affair.

I'll waive my plea about being myself.

It wouldn't be easy to prove, anyhow.

I'll accept that part of the case as lost.

But as I was roaming the moors just before,

I felt the shoes of my conscience pinch,

And I said to myself, "Yes, you're a sinner——"

BUTTON-MOULDER.

Now, you're beginning all over again——

PEER. No, I'm not; I mean sinning on the grand scale,

Not in deeds alone but in purpose and word.

When I was abroad I sank so low——

BUTTON-MOULDER.

So you say, but why don't you show me the proof?

PEER. Give me time; I'll go and find a parson,

Confess at top speed and bring you his notes.

BUTTON-MOULDER. All right! If you can confirm your claim,
You may yet keep out of the casting-ladle.
But my orders, Peer——

PEER. It was years ago;
It goes back to the days when I was a young fool,
When I believed in Fate, when I played at being
A prophet. Well? May I . . . ?

BUTTON-MOULDER. But——

PEER. My dear friend,
You haven't got much to do, after all;
And the air round here's so keen and crisp
That it adds years and years to the normal span.
The parson at Justedal always said,
"Hardly anyone ever dies down here."

BUTTON-MOULDER.
To the next crossroads, then, but no further than that.

PEER. A parson! I must get hold of a parson
Even if I have to handcuff him.

ACT V.—SCENE 10

SCENE: *A heather slope. A road winds away upwards into the mountains.*

PEER. "This may come in useful for many things,"
Said Esben, when he found the magpie's wing.
Who would have thought that these sins of mine
Would have got me out of that last-minute scrape?
In any case, it's a rotten position.
I may jump from the frying-pan into the fire.
But there's also a saying that has stood
The test of time, "While there's life there's hope."

(A thin person, wearing a cassock well hitched-up, and carrying a fowler's net over his shoulder, comes running down the path.)

Who's there? A priest with a fowling-net?

Heigho! I seem to be in luck's way!

Good evening, sir! This road's hard going.

THIN MAN. I agree, but I'd go through more than this
For a soul.

PEER. So there's someone on his way
To Heaven.

THIN MAN. I hope to the other place.

PEER. Do you mind if I walk with you part of the way?

THIN MAN. Not at all! I'm looking for company.

PEER. I'm very worried——

THIN MAN. *Heraus!* Out with it!

PEER. You'll find that I'm quite a respectable fellow;
I've kept to the law most scrupulously;
I have never been handcuffed nor put behind bars;
Yet, the best of us sometimes loses his way
And stumbles——

THIN MAN. That might happen to anyone.

PEER. You see, these little things——

THIN MAN. Are they so little?

PEER. Yes, I've managed to steer clear of sins *en gros*.

THIN MAN. In that case, old chap, you can leave me in peace;
I'm not what you seem to think I am.

You appear very interested in my hands?

PEER. Your nails are very well manicured.

THIN MAN. And my feet? You're having a jolly good look.

PEER (*pointing*).

Is that hoof natural?

THIN MAN. I flatter myself

That it is.

PEER (*lifting his hat*). I'd have sworn you were a priest.

So I have the honour—the best is the best.

When the front door's open, you don't try the back;

When you meet a king, you don't bother with lackeys.

THIN MAN.

Shake hands. You don't seem the least bit biased.

Well, well! And what can I do for you?

No, don't start asking for money or power.

I couldn't oblige you for anything.

There's been an awful slump in business;
 Trade has gone completely to pot;
 New souls are rare; now and then, an odd one——

PEER. Has Mankind improved so noticeably?

THIN MAN. On the contrary, he gets worse and worse;
 Most people end up in the casting-ladle.

PEER. I've heard more than enough about that ladle;
 It's in that connection that I am here.

THIN MAN. What's on your mind?

PEER. Would it look very bad
 If I asked you for——

THIN MAN. A decent home, eh?

PEER. You've guessed what I want before I ask.
 Trade has, as you've said, gone to rack and ruin,
 So you need not be overscrupulous——

THIN MAN. My dear fellow——

PEER. My needs are quite moderate.
 I don't even ask for a living wage.
 I just want to be a friendly tenant.

THIN MAN. A warm room?

PEER. Not too warm and, if possible,
 Permission to come and go, as I like;
 And the right——may I call it such?——to move out
 Should the chance of better times come round.

THIN MAN.

My dear friend, it hurts me; you'd hardly believe
 What a glut of similar applications
 Comes from other dear friends when they learn
 That they're going to leave their earthly home.

PEER. But when I consider my past behaviour,
 I feel I've more than a right to get in.

THIN MAN. But your sins were such little ones.

PEER. Yes, in a way——
 If you exclude my traffic in niggers.

THIN MAN.

There were some who trafficked in minds and souls,
 But who messed it up badly and weren't allowed in.

PEER. What about the idols I sent to China?

THIN MAN. Fatuous stuff! It just makes us laugh.
 There are people who've sent out far worse muck
 In sermons and art and literature,
 And they've had to stay outside. . . .

PEER. Do you know
 I once pretended to be a prophet?

THIN MAN.
 Overseas? Pure nonsense! Most people's *Sehen*
Ins blaue ends in the casting-ladle.
 If that's all you've got to support your case
 Then I can't let you in, however much
 I might want to.

PEER. Then listen. When I was shipwrecked
 I scrambled on to an upturned boat.
 There's a proverb, "A drowning man grasps at a straw."
 There's another one, "Every man for himself."
 Well, I, more or less, robbed the cook of his life.

THIN MAN. I wouldn't care if you'd, more or less,
 Robbed your kitchenmaid of something else.
 What's all this talk about "more or less"?
 With all due deference let me ask you,
 Who's going to throw away precious fuel
 In times like these on such feeble stuff?
 Now don't lose your temper; it's your sins
 I'm mocking—forgive me for being so frank.
 Come, come, dearest friend, forget the idea;
 Prepare yourself for the casting-ladle.
 What would you gain if I gave you board
 And lodging? Just think; you're a sensible man.
 Well, you'd keep your memory; perfectly true!
 And what would that do for you? Neither your heart
 Nor your head would get any pleasure from it.
 No! You'd get what the Swedes call, "Very poor
 sport."
 You've little to laugh or to cry about,
 Nothing to make you rejoice or despair,
 Nothing to make you go hot or cold,
 But only a constant anxiety.

PEER. They say you can't find out where the shoe
Is pinching when you're not wearing it.

THIN MAN. That's quite true. Thanks be to so-and-so,
I only wear one shoe. All the same,
It was fortunate that we talked about shoes;
It reminds me I must be going at once.
I'm collecting a steak; I hope he turns out
Nice and juicy. I'm off! No time for gossip.

PEER. And may I ask what misdemeanours
Have fattened this friend of yours?

THIN MAN. I believe
He has been himself by night and by day;
And that, at bottom, is the chief thing.

PEER. Himself? Then does that sort belong to you?

THIN MAN. They may or may not; the door's always
ajar.

Remember that you can be yourself
In two sorts of ways—the right and the wrong.
Perhaps you know that someone in Paris
Has recently found out how to make
Portraits by using the sun. You can get
Direct pictures or else what are known
As negatives. Light and shade are reversed
In the latter, and to the unpractised eye
They're not attractive, but the likeness is there,
And it only remains to bring it out.
Now if, in the course of its life, a soul
Has portrayed itself in the negative way,
The plate is sent on to me. It is not
Discarded. I start to work on it,
And the metamorphosis takes place.
I dip it and steam it, burn it and clean it
With sulphur and other chemicals
Until the picture that should have appeared
Does appear; we call it the positive.
But if anyone goes and does what you've done
And, more or less, blots himself out, then no
Amount of sulphur or potash will help.

PEER. So they go to you as black as a raven
And leave you as white as a ptarmigan?
Dare I ask you whose the negative is
That you're turning into a positive now?

THIN MAN. The name's Peter Gynt.

PEER. Peter Gynt indeed?
And is he himself?

THIN MAN. He swears he is.

PEER. He's a trustworthy man—this Peter Gynt.

THIN MAN. You know him?

PEER. Oh yes, we're on nodding terms.
A sort of acquaintance, you know.

THIN MAN. I'm late.
Where did you see him last?

PEER. Down at the Cape.

THIN MAN. *Di Buona Speranza?*

PEER. Yes, but I don't
Expect he'll be staying there much longer.

THIN MAN. Then I must fly. I hope I don't miss him.
The Cape, the Cape! Not a very good spot;
Full of missionaries from Stavanger.

(Races off southwards.)

PEER. The dirty dog! Look at him bounding away
With his dribbling tongue; he'll be disappointed.
It was very nice to take in such an ass.
The airs he gives himself! Oh, the grand lord!
He's got a fat lot to swank about!
And he won't get rich on his present job;
He'll fall from his perch with his whole bag of tricks.
Not that I'm safe in the saddle myself!
The "self" nobility's thrown me out.

(A shooting star is seen. He nods after it.)

Greetings from Peer Gynt, brother shooting star!
Shine forth, be extinguished, disappear for ever.

*(He seems to draw into himself as if in fear; he goes deeper
into the mists. Quiet for a time, then he shouts:)*

Is there no one, no one in this great world,
No one in the depths, no one in Heaven?

*(Returns, throws his hat on the ground and tears his hair.
Gradually, a great stillness comes over him.)*

So a soul can go back, so wretchedly poor,
Into the grey mists of nothingness.
Beautiful earth, do not be angry
That I have trod you and left no mark.
Beautiful sun, you have squandered your light,
Your glorious light, on an empty house.
There was no one within to be heartened and cheered;
The owner had gone. You beautiful sun,
You beautiful earth who wasted your warmth
And sustenance on my mother's womb!
How mean is the spirit, how lavish is nature!
How costly to pay with one's life for one's birth!
I will climb to the top of the highest peak,
I will see the sun rise once again,
I will gaze on the promised land till my eyes
Are tired out. Then let the snow pile over me,
And above my tomb write, "Here No One is buried."
And afterwards, well—let come what will.

CHURCHGOERS *(singing on the path)*.

Most blessed of mornings,
When the tongues of the Kingdom of God
Struck the earth like flaming swords!
Now His sons' hymns rise up
From the earth to His Heaven
In the tongue of the Kingdom of God.

(PEER GYNT shrinks into himself in fright.)

PEER. No, don't look there; it's a desert waste.
Alas! I was dead long before my death.

(He tries to creep in among the bushes but comes out on the crossroads.)

BUTTON-MOULDER.

Good morning, Peer Gynt! Where's your list of sins?

PEER. I've shouted and whistled all over the place.

BUTTON-MOULDER. And you've seen no one?

PEER. A travelling
Photographer

BUTTON-MOULDER. Then your time is up.

PEER. Everything is up. Can you hear that owl
Hooting? He must have smelt the dawn.

BUTTON-MOULDER. It's the matins ringing.

PEER (*pointing*). What's that light over there?

BUTTON-MOULDER. Only a cottage.

PEER. I can hear a sound
Like the wind in the trees.

BUTTON-MOULDER. It's a woman singing.

PEER. There—there I shall find my list of sins.

(*The BUTTON-MOULDER takes hold of him.*)

BUTTON-MOULDER. It's time to set your house in order.

(*They have come out of the thicket and are standing near the
hut. Dawn.*)

PEER. Set my house in order? It's there! Clear off!
If your ladle were as big as a coffin,
It would still be too small for me and my list.

BUTTON-MOULDER.

To the third crossroads, Peer Gynt, but then——!

(*Turns away and goes.*)

PEER (*approaching the hut*).

Backwards or forwards, it's just as far,
Within or without the path is as narrow. (*Stops.*)
No! I can hear it—a wild endless cry
Telling me go in, go back, go back home.

(*Advances a few steps but stops again.*)

“Round about,” said the Boyg.

(*Hears singing in the hut.*)

No! No! This time,

It's straight through no matter how narrow the path!

(He runs towards the hut. At that moment SOLVEIG comes out. She is dressed for church, and her prayer-book is wrapped in a handkerchief; she carries a stick in her hand. She stands there erect and gentle. PEER GYNT throws himself down on the threshold.)

Pass judgment on the sinner before you!
SOLVEIG. It is he! It is he! Praise be to God!

(She gropes for him.)

PEER. Cry out how wickedly I have sinned!
SOLVEIG. You have sinned in nothing, my only love.

(Gropes for him again and finds him.)

BUTTON-MOULDER *(behind the hut)*.

The list, Peer Gynt?

PEER. Cry my sins aloud!

SOLVEIG *(sitting down beside him)*.

You have made my life a beautiful song.
Bless you for having come back at last!
And blessed, oh, blessed, be this Whitsun morn!

PEER. I am lost!

SOLVEIG. There is One who understands.

PEER *(laughs)*. Lost! Unless you can answer a riddle!

SOLVEIG. Ask it!

PEER. Ask it? Yes, you must answer it.

Can you tell me where Peer Gynt has been
Since you saw him last?

SOLVEIG. Where he has been?

PEER. With the mark of destiny on his brow,
Where has he been since he first sprang forth
As a thought newly born in the mind of God?
Can you tell me that? If not I must go
Home to the land of the valley of shadows.

SOLVEIG *(smiling)*.

Your riddle is easy.

PEER. Then tell me, where
Was I, my real self, my whole self, my true self?
Where was I, with God's seal upon my brow?

SOLVEIG. In my faith, in my hope and in my love.

PEER (*starting back*).

What are you saying? *You're* talking in riddles.
You speak as a mother speaks of her child.

SOLVEIG. That is true; but who is his father? He
Who forgives in answer to a mother's prayers.

(*A gleam of light seems to break over PEER GYNT. He cries out.*)

PEER. My mother! My wife! You holy woman!
Oh, hide me, hide me within your love!

(*He clings to her and hides his face in her lap. A long silence.
The sun rises.*)

SOLVEIG (*singing softly*).

Sleep, my dear, my dearest love!
I will rock you and watch beside you.

The boy has sat on his mother's lap.
They've played together the whole day long.

The boy shall lie in his mother's arms
The whole day long. God bless you, my love!

The boy shall lie against his mother's heart
The whole day long. He is weary now.

Sleep, my dear, my precious one, sleep, sleep.
I will rock you, my boy, my darling. Sleep, sleep.

BUTTON-MOULDER'S VOICE (*behind hut*).

We shall meet at the last crossroads, Peer,
, And then we'll see if—— I say no more.

SOLVEIG (*singing louder as the sunshine bursts forth*).

I will rock you and watch beside you.
Sleep and dream, my own dear love!

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Accn. No.....

- 1. Books may be retained for a period not exceeding fifteen days.**